

MARVEL

VOL
9

DEADPOOL

CLASSIC



FEATURING

AGENT X

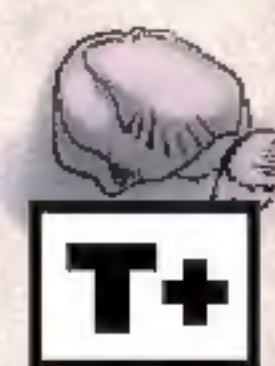
TM

**WRITER GAIL SIMONE (BIRDS OF PREY, BATGIRL)
TAKES ON MARVEL'S MERC WITH A MOUTH!**

When Deadpool crosses paths with the Black Swan, the telepathic villain infects Wade with a virus that eats away at his mind. Can Deadpool overcome his degenerating thought processes and continue his merc work? Not likely! The madness continues as Deadpool must steal the Rhino's horn and play bodyguard to mutant songstress Dazzler. Along the way, he'll get by with a little help from some new friends: Sandi Brandenburg, Ratbag, Outlaw and the Taskmaster. But when a showdown with the Black Swan goes wrong, who — if anyone — will survive? And in the aftermath: Meet Agent X! He appears on Sandi's doorstep, an amnesiac blank slate with healing powers, uncanny fighting skills and a burning desire to be a mercenary. Is he a deeply damaged Deadpool? And if not, who or what is he?



Collecting *Deadpool* (1997) #65-69 and *Agent X* #1-6,
written by Gail Simone and illustrated by UDON Studios.



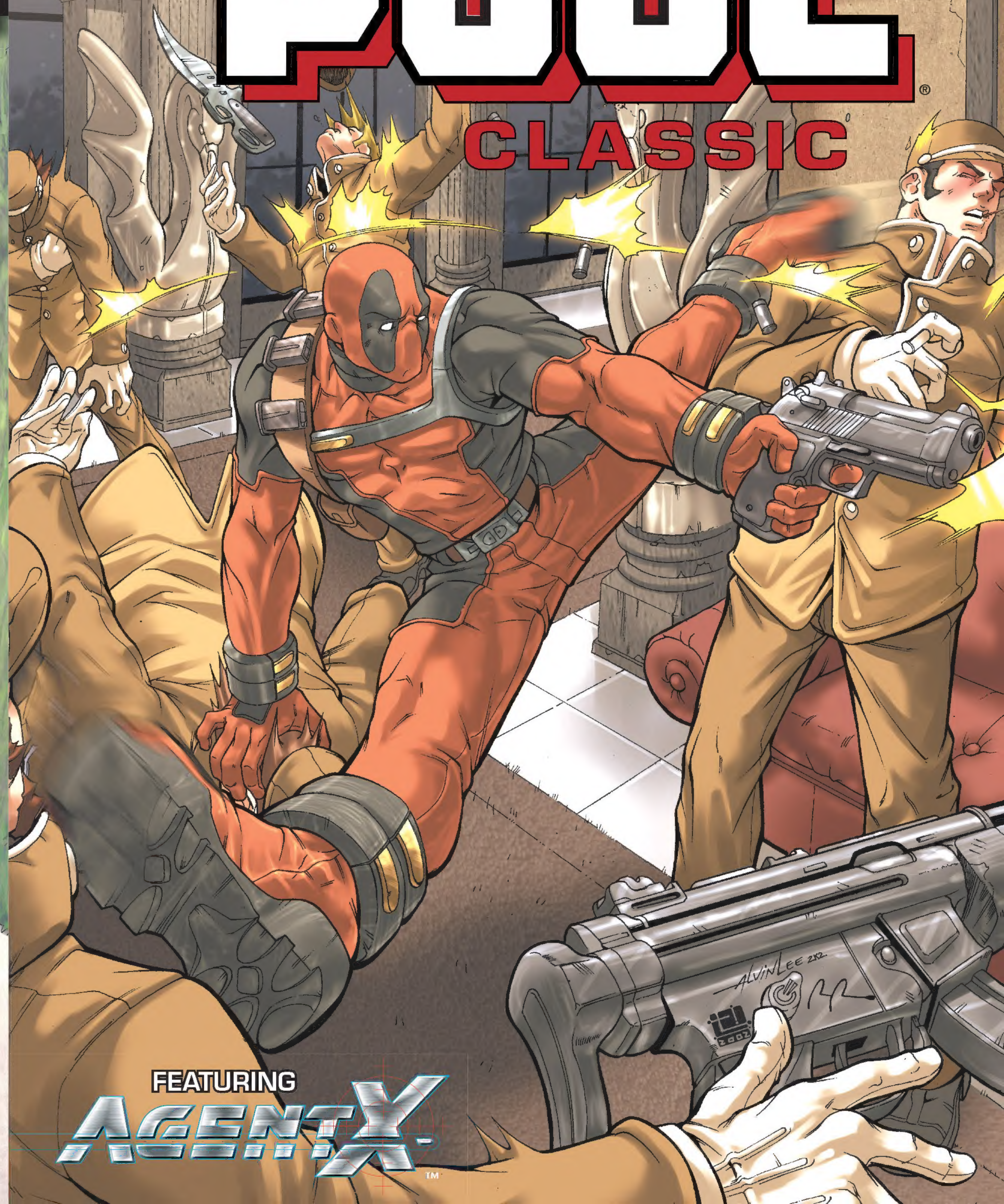
MARVEL

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DEADPOOL

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AGENT X

MARVEL® COMICS

DEADPOOL®

MARVEL

65

SIMONE
UDON



INC.



ALVIN LEE ARNISTOTLE UDON



Shhhhhhhhhh!

WHAP!

Daddy's working.



"Whistle while you merc! La la la la la la!"

And jobs have been scarce, lately. Sort of a hitman recession.



DOOT!

Interesting fact: In 1995, the city of Kobe, Japan, experienced a horrific earthquake.

So bad, the Japanese defense force couldn't begin to cope with the devastation.



And then it got weird...



Sorrerrrry, bad haircut man! No calling friends on the radio!



Anyway, guess who saved the day by supplying food, medicine, and supply trucks?

The largest crime family in Japan, that's who.



These guys ain't them.

OW--
--could you--
--OW!

...give it a rest, maybe?



"Take. Out. Wrenched. Ankle."

"Ha. Ha. Ha!"

Inguh!

These are the guys who robbed the ambulance drivers.



And tonight I get to shoot one of them.

Goody.

I'm humiliating their guards on the roof of a restaurant that I'll sure as hell never be *invited* to. This place makes *Tavern on the Green* look like *McDonalds*.

"Yes, I'd like the *petite quail eyeball souffle*, with a side order of *snobby hamster snouts in cream sauce*, please."

These are the *Backstreet Boys* of imported crime...they *suck*, but you can't argue with their *profit margin*.

Meet "*the Four Winds*"-- rival crime dons that hate each other and everyone else.

They cause more human misery than Kathie Lee Gifford.

Not one has ever spent a day in prison. Each dodges a dozen assassination attempts a year. And tonight, *this guy*...

...wants me to kill *this guy*. Right in the middle of their truce talks. *Greedy, huh?*

Manishi--
West.

Higashi--
East.

Minamiyori--
South.

Kita--
North.

What can I say? I take pride in my work.

Say goodnight, you *bathrobe-wearin' custard*!

Uh-oh.



SHROUDED IN STOLEN IDENTITIES AND CLANDESTINE SECRETS, THE MERC-WITH-A-MOUTH IS A MAN OF MYSTERY. HERO? VILLAIN? SOCIOPATH? DEADPOOL MAKES HIS OWN RULES AND PLAYS BY NOBODY'S GAME. HE IS AN AGENT OF CHAOS CONFINED TO A WORLD OF CONSTRICTING ORDER! STAN LEE PRESENTS:

DEADPOOL

HEALING FACTOR PROLOGUE

Story by
Gail Simone

Art by *Udon*
with *Alvin Lee,*
Rob Ross,
Eric Vedder,
A-Zero & TR2

Udon Chief
Erik Ko

Letters by
Dave Sharpe

Edited by
Mike Marts &
Mike Raicht

Chief
Joe Quesada

President
Bill Jemas

I see the future, and it's me saying "OWWWW!"

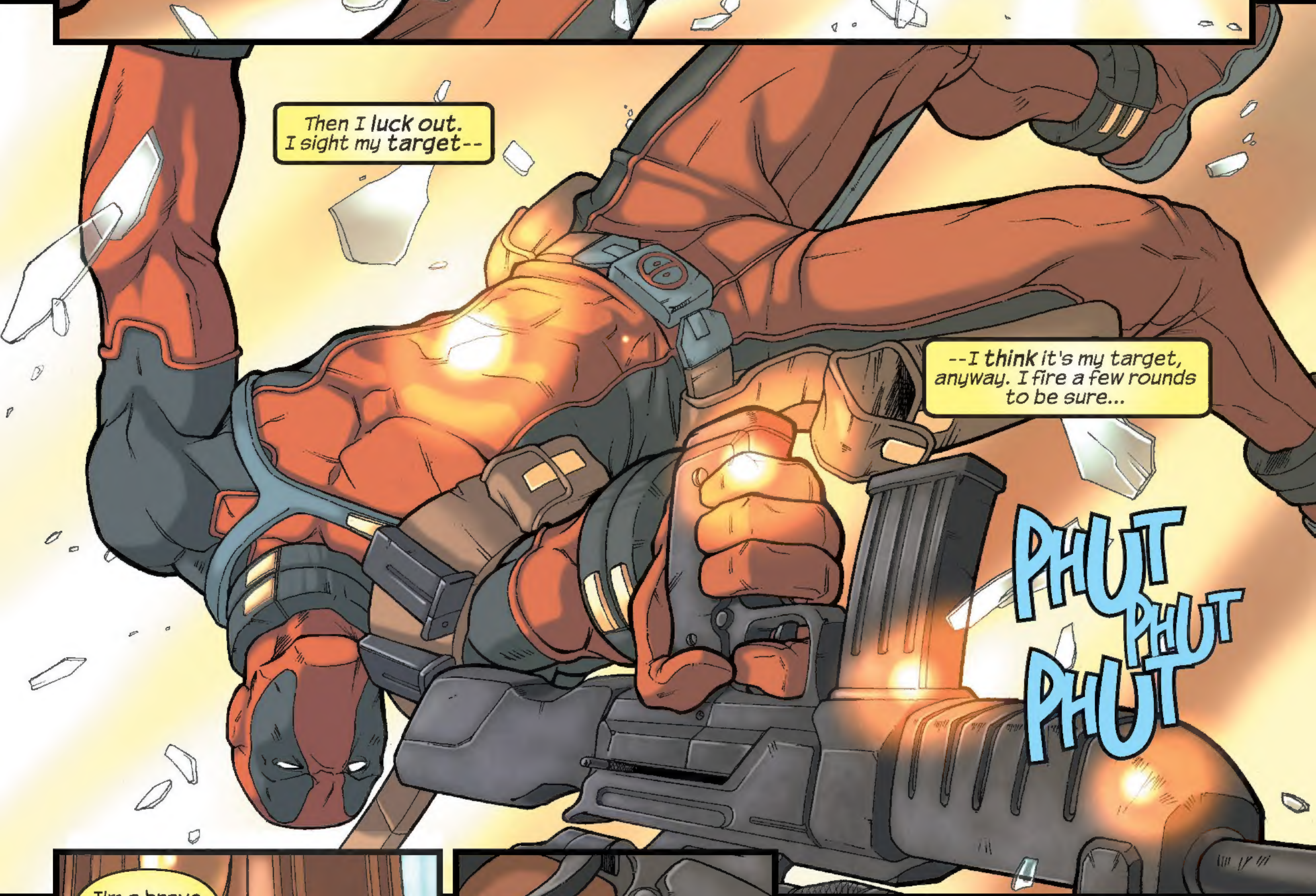
Important: Deadpool would like it to be known that he does his own stunts. Also, do not attempt to duplicate these feats unless you are goofy. Even then, it's probably a bad idea.

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This is bad. If I don't crack my spine in the fall, I'll be right in the middle of four warring gangs with many, many guns and bullets and shooting and why did I name myself Deadpool, anyway?

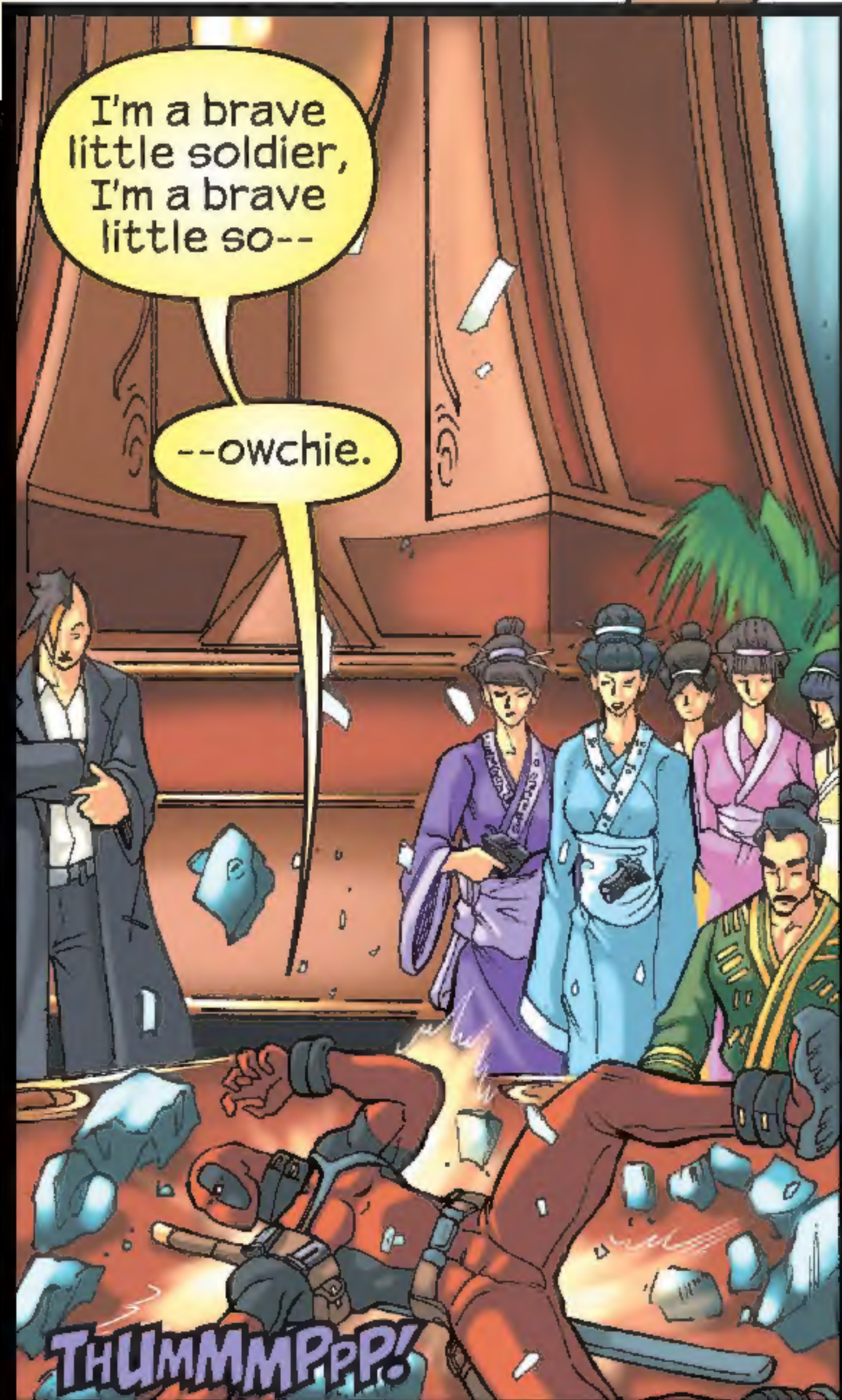
Quick! Someone get me a comfy pillow!



Then I luck out. I sight my target--

--I think it's my target, anyway. I fire a few rounds to be sure...

PHUT
PHUT
PHUT



I'm a brave little soldier, I'm a brave little so--

--owchie.

THUMMPPP!



Fun, fun, where's my gun...

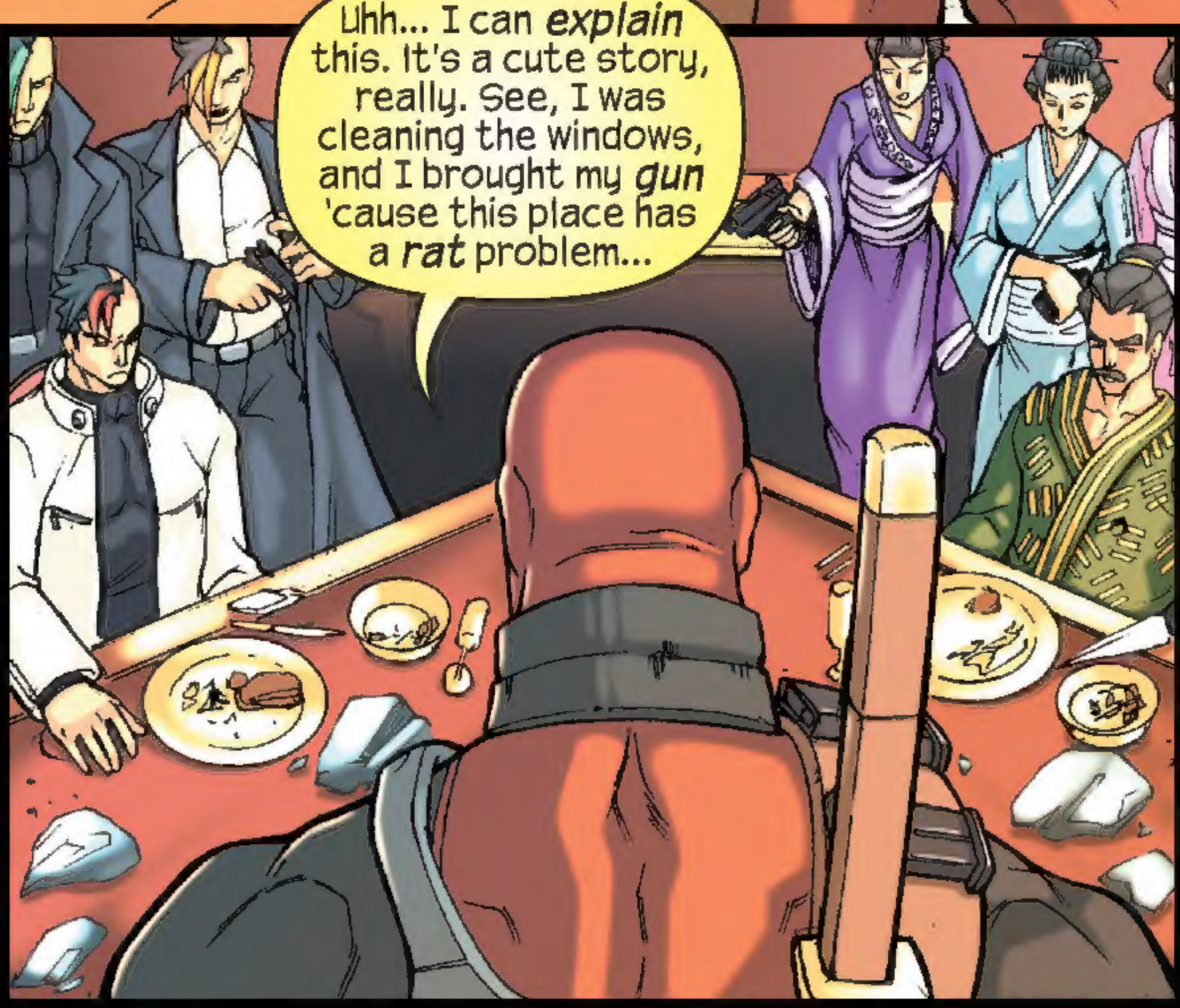


... have at thee, varlets! Kapow!

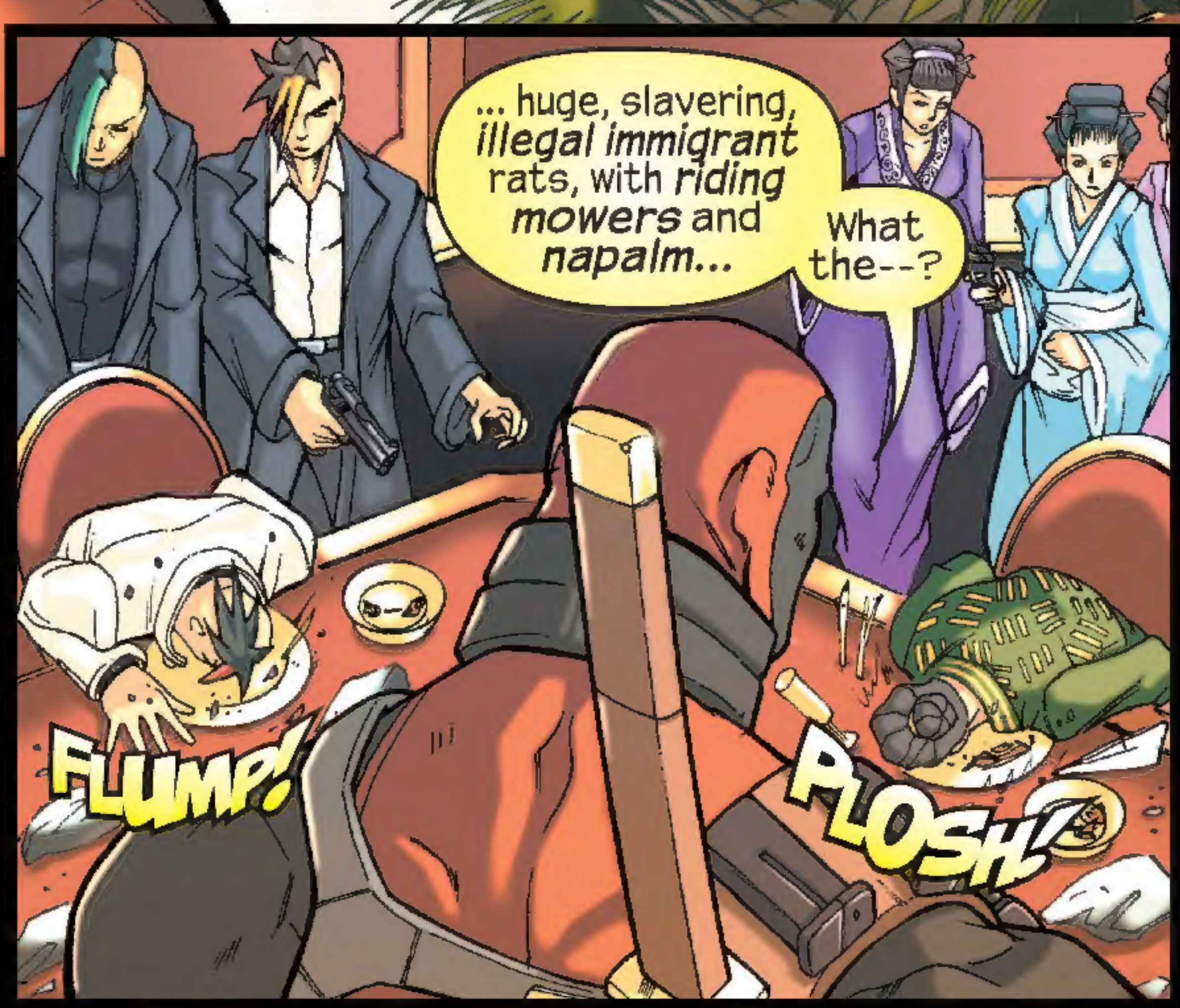


Uh...
Bah! Barrel is bent. Bent barrel is bad. Bleah.

I hate when something messes with my varlet hunt.



Uhh... I can **explain** this. It's a cute story, really. See, I was cleaning the windows, and I brought my **gun** 'cause this place has a **rat** problem...



... huge, slaving, **illegal immigrant rats**, with riding mowers and napalm...

What the--?

FLUMP!

FLOSH!



Okay, okay... **maybe** I accidentally shot those two guys when I fell-- but you guys all hate each other **anyway**, am I right? Let's hug, shall we? Okay?

Big, healing, **non-lethal** hugs?

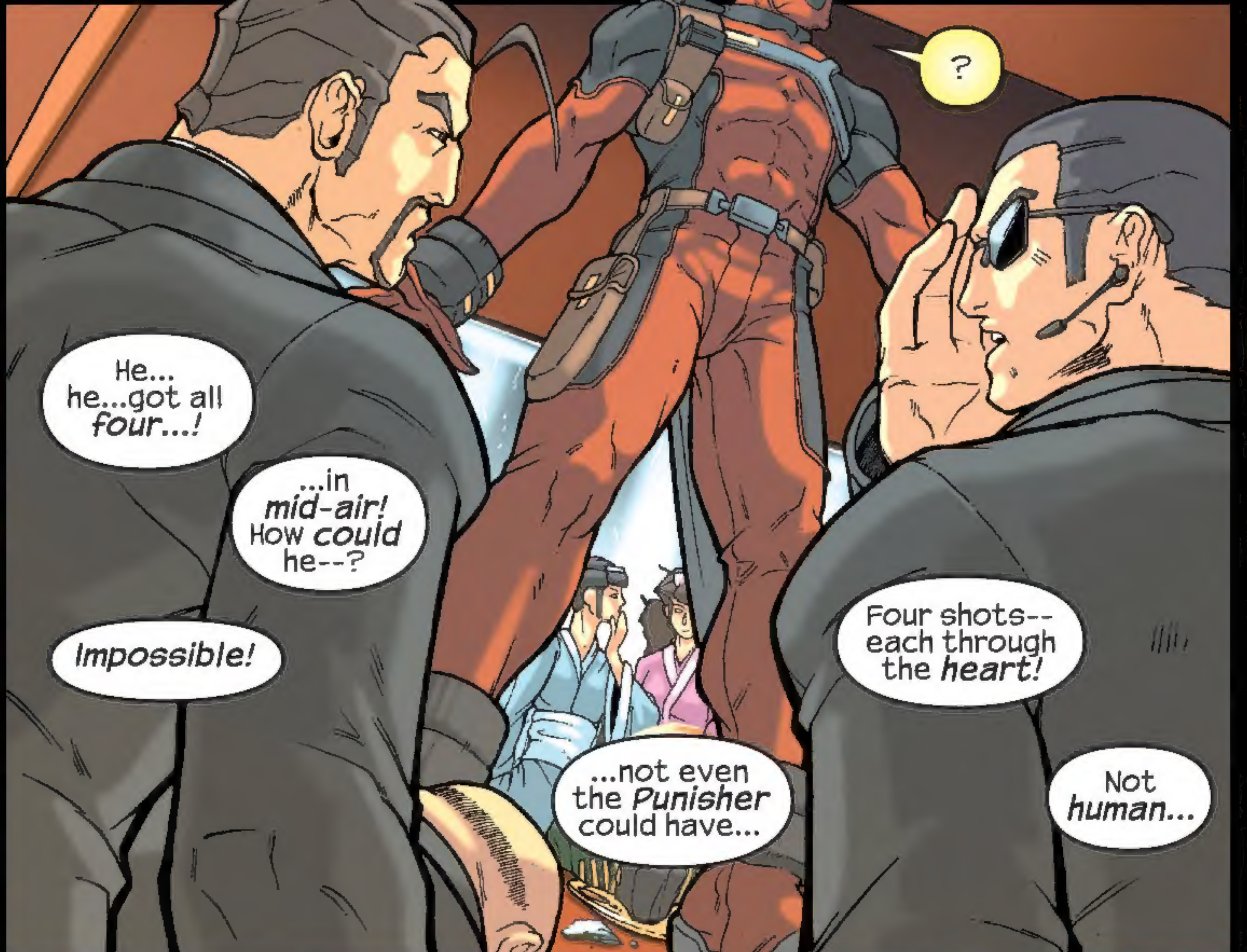
We never just **cuddle** anymore.



Crap.

THUD!

FLOOSH!





OWWWW!

Ow!
You shot
my butt!

I am *so*
anti-gun just
this minute!

BRAKKA

P-TCHU

KPAO



Think it's funny,
shooting me in the
hind end while my
back is turned?

I'd like to
humbly apolo--
urhhh!

And it's
almost *swimsuit*
season!



Let's make
a *rule*. From
now on--

--no *shooting*
the nice mercenary's
rump roast!

That
seems very
reasonable...



This is *not* me
running away. It
may be a *lot* of
things, but clearly,
it's *not* running
away.

This
assassination
has gone on
hiatus for
retooling.

Plus, my
sit-upon is
burning!



THIP!

What?
I'm *fired*,
you say?

That's
just so
unfair!



SLORP



My favorite gym:
Merc Works.

Bullwhip
Class
Line-up here
LADIES ONLY

That's *amazing*,
Mr. D. I can't believe
you got *all four* like
that...while falling, and
with all that glass--
incredible!

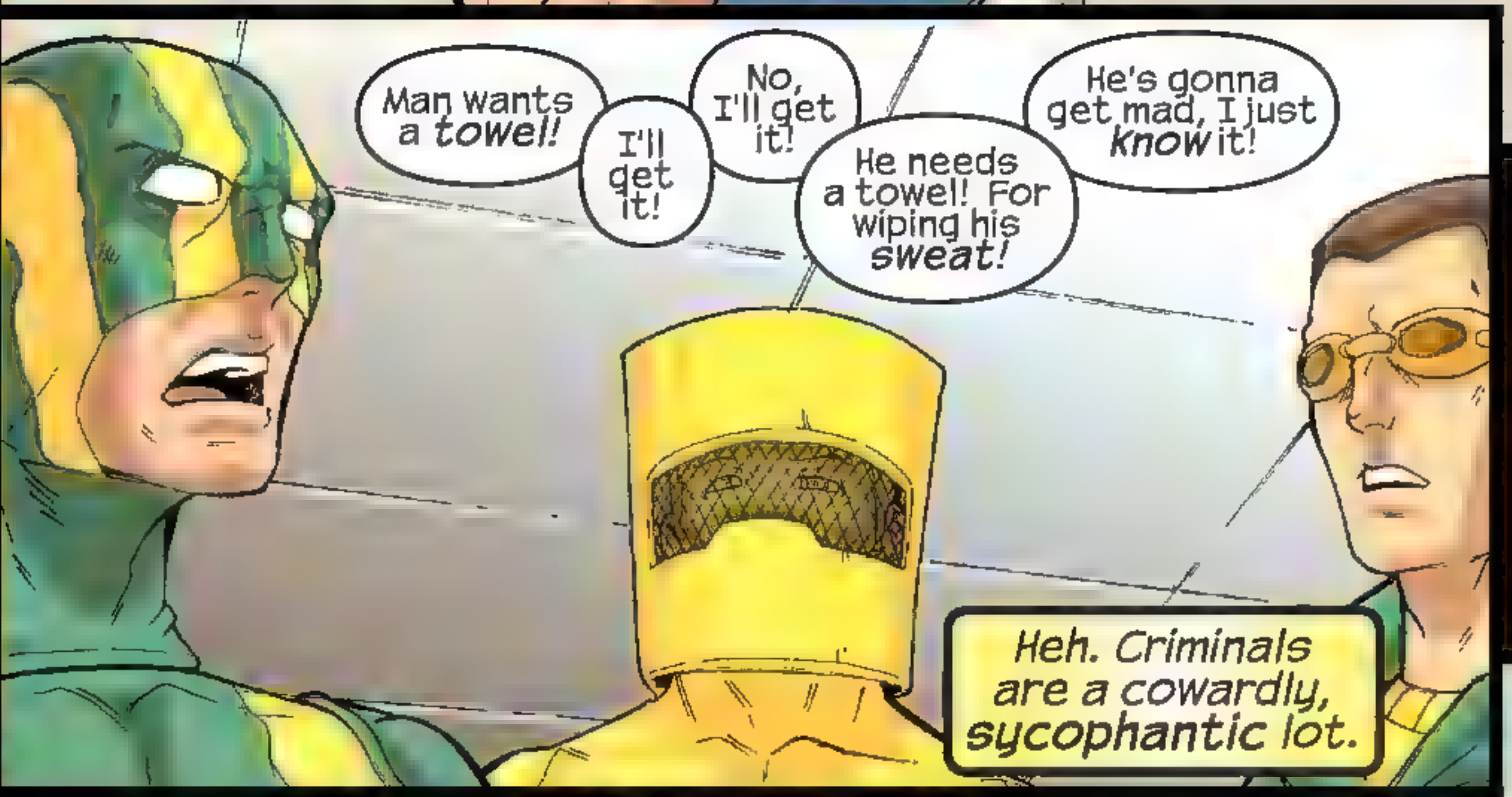
Those
guys were
supposed to be
untouchable!

Come on,
man, tell it
again!



I don't
have a
towel.
Why is it
I'm *done*, and
yet somehow, I
don't have a
towel?

A.I.M.



Man wants
a towel!

I'll
get
it!

No,
I'll get
it!

He needs
a towel! For
wiping his
sweat!

He's gonna
get mad, I just
know!

Heh. Criminals
are a cowardly,
sycophantic lot.



Here you go,
Mr. Deadpool! Nice,
clean towel. It's
still warm from
the dryer!

Ooooooh!

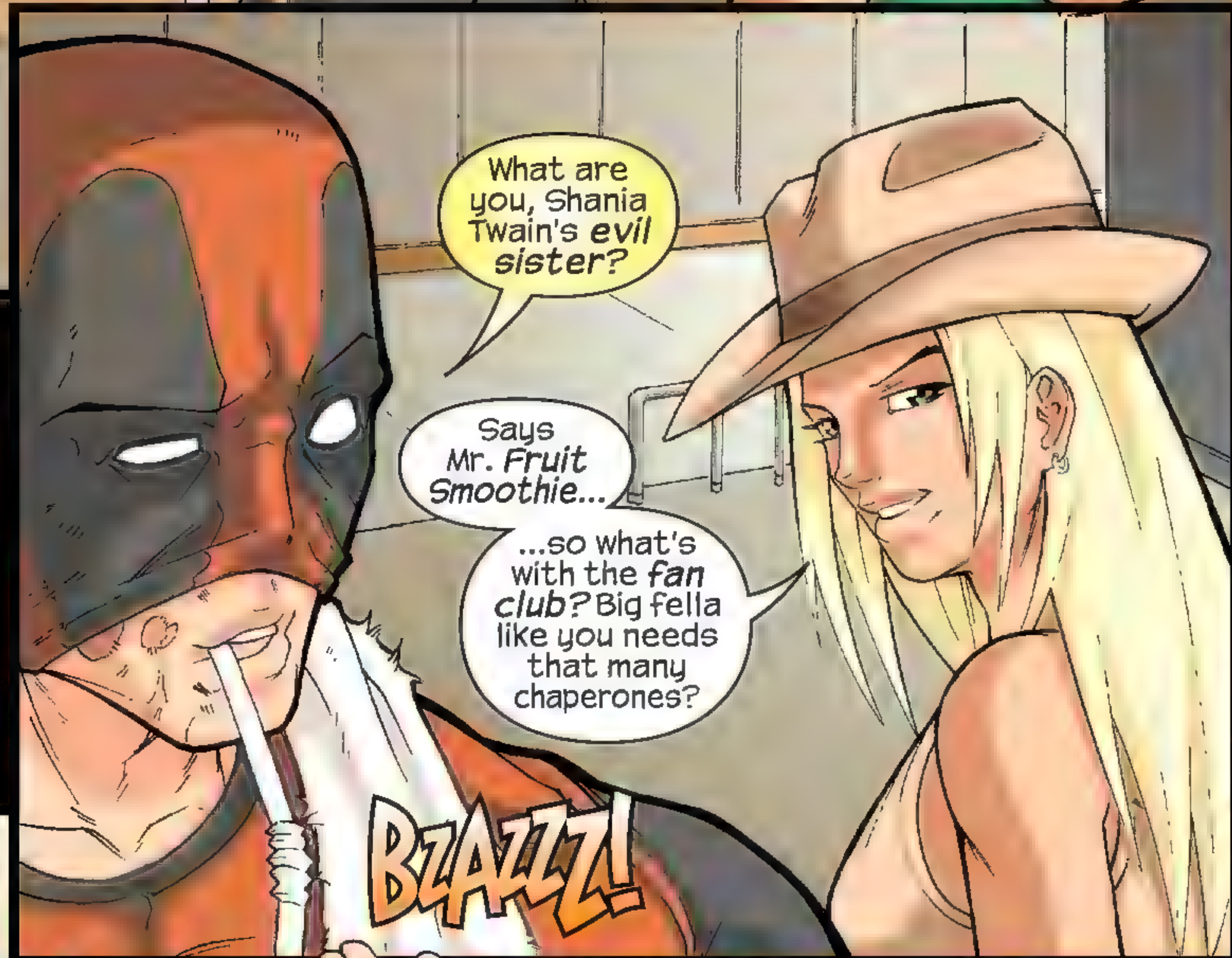
Bet *that's*
refreshing!

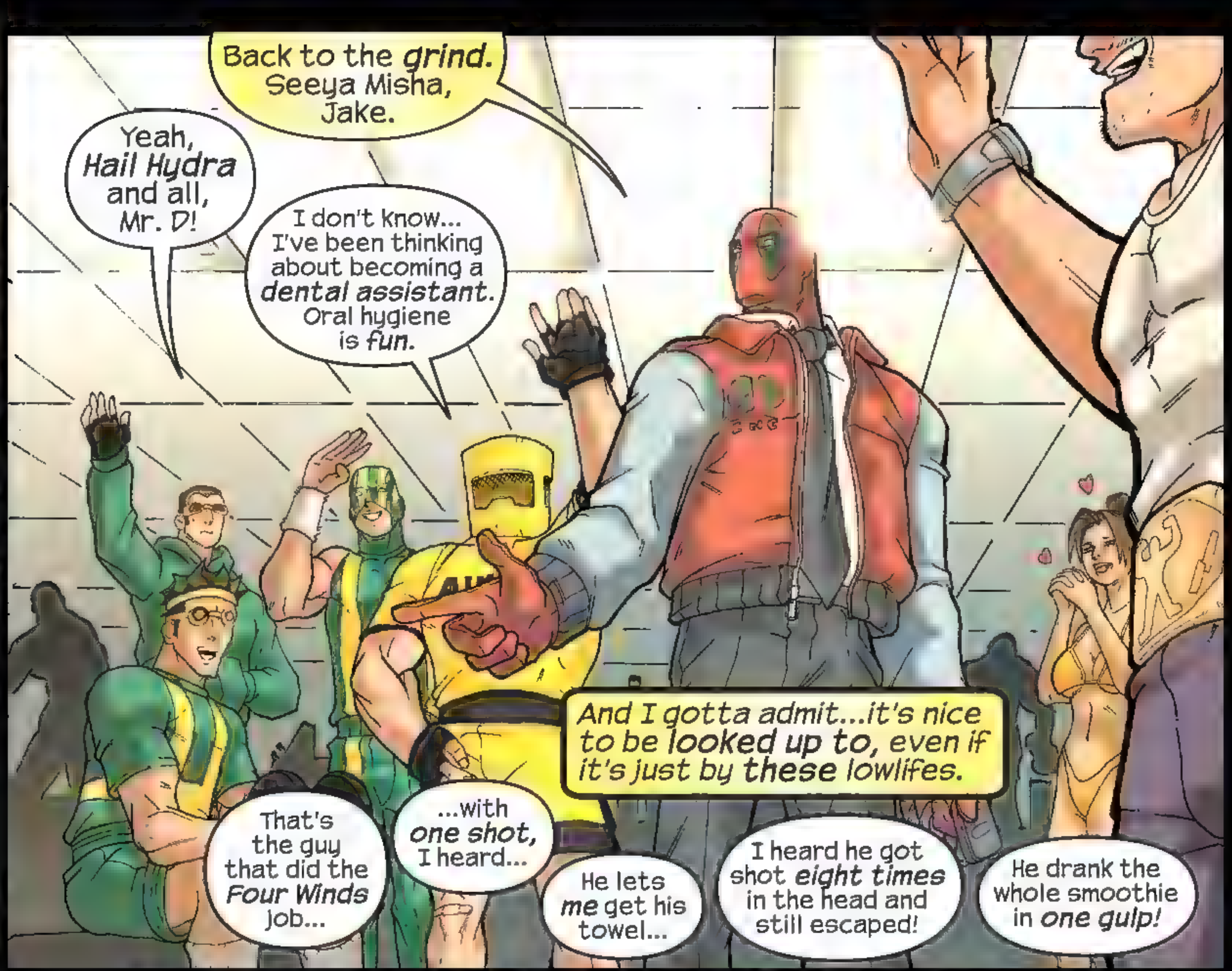
Nice warm
towel for the
man!

I hate being a
henchman. I gotta
go *solo*.

Thanks,
Misha.

Since word spread of the Four Winds
hit, I'm like Elvis to these guys. Except
without the fried 'nanner sandwiches.





I gotta admit, I feel better about myself than I have in a long time. Less funny, more fatal.



I mean, maybe it wasn't an accident. Maybe I really am that good.



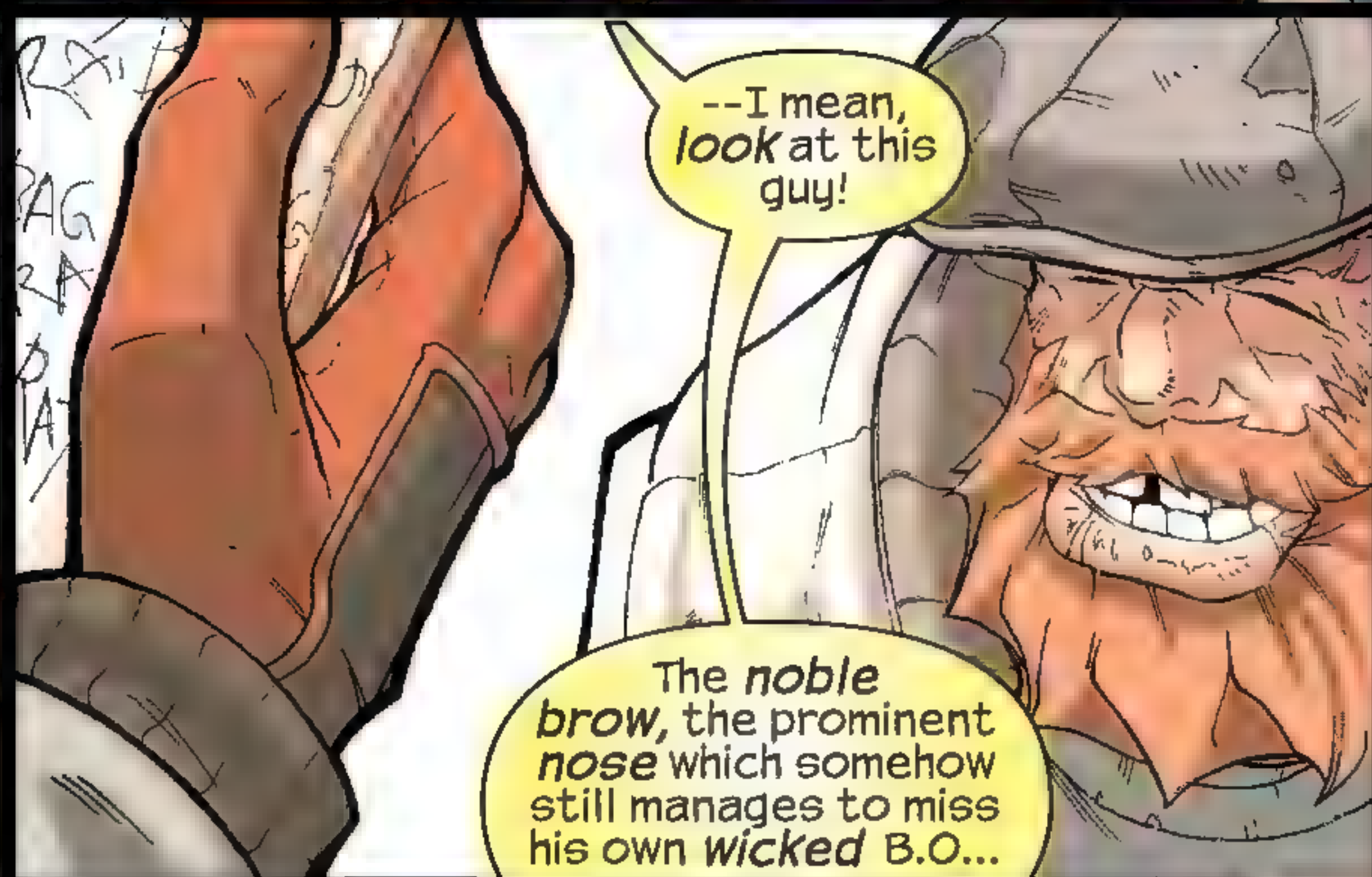
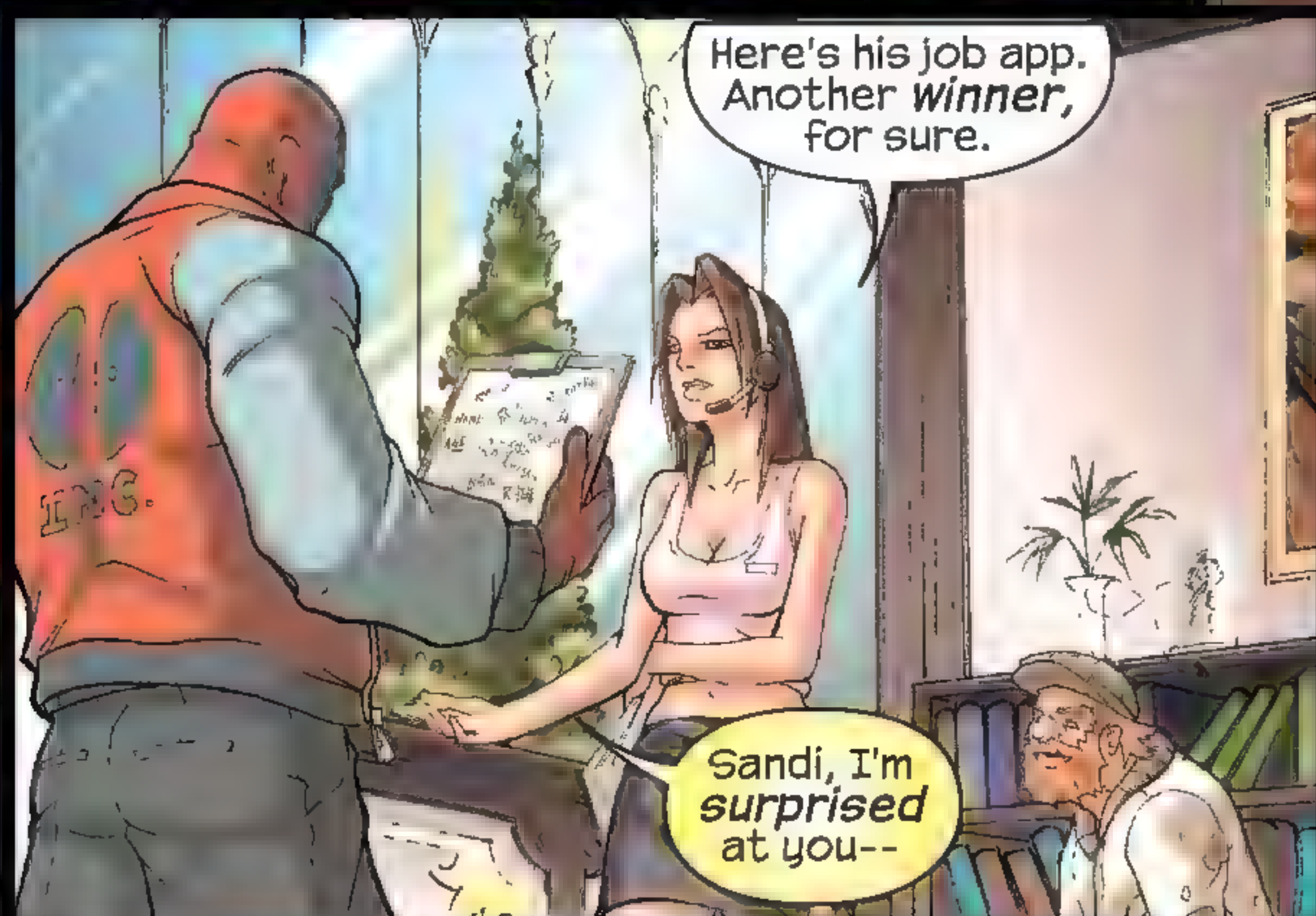
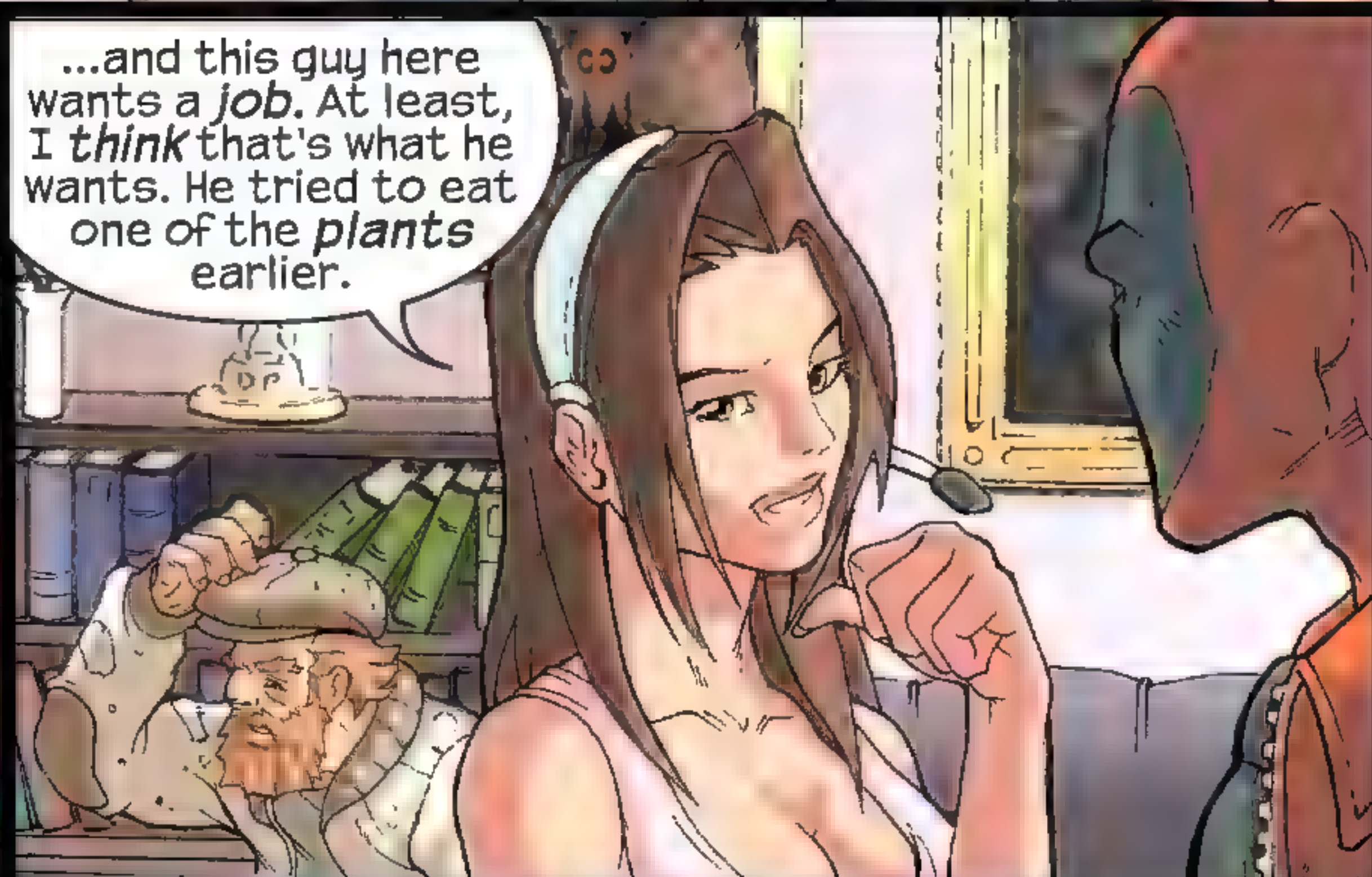
But what difference does it make? Business is better than ever--that's what counts.

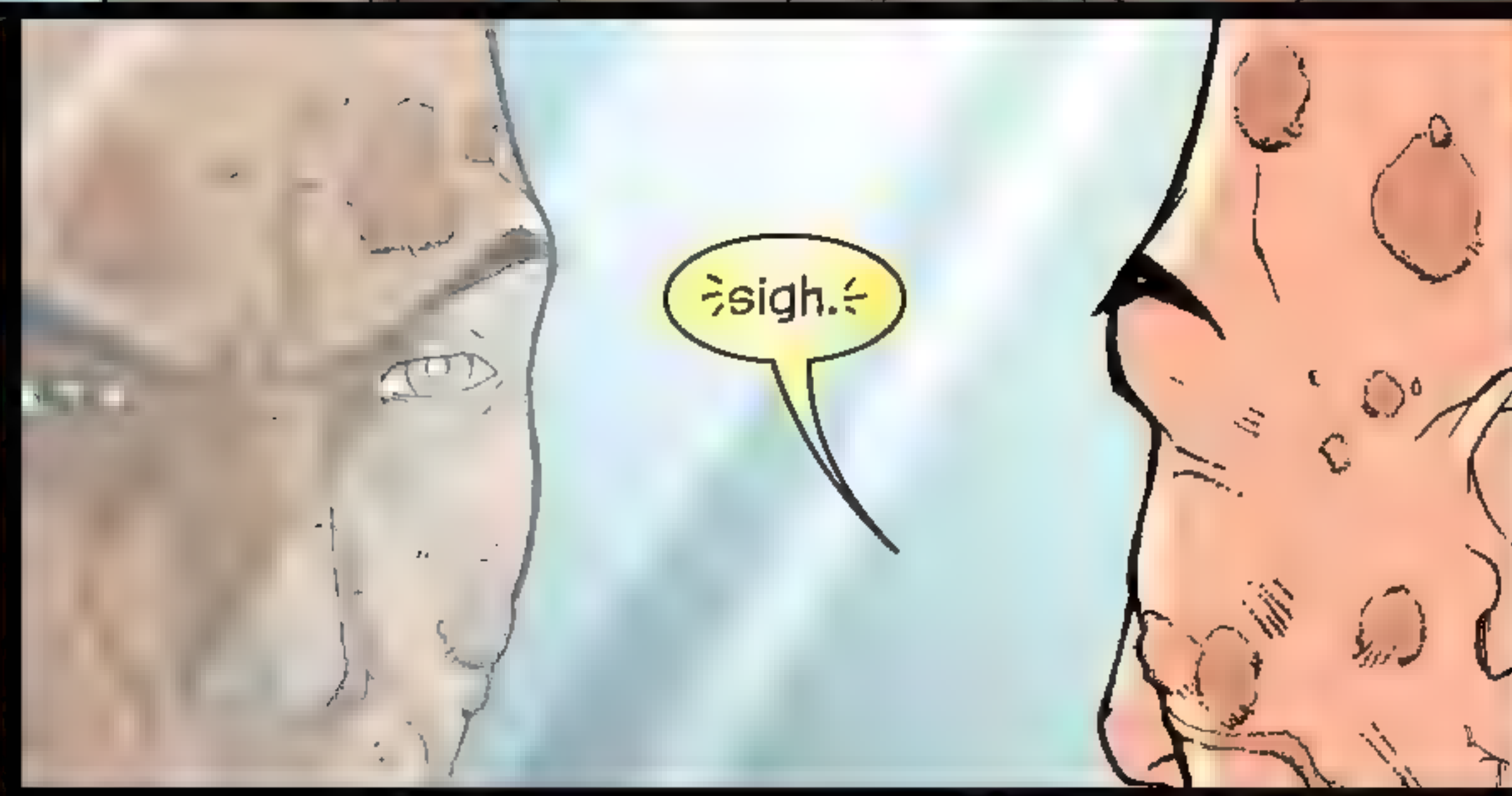
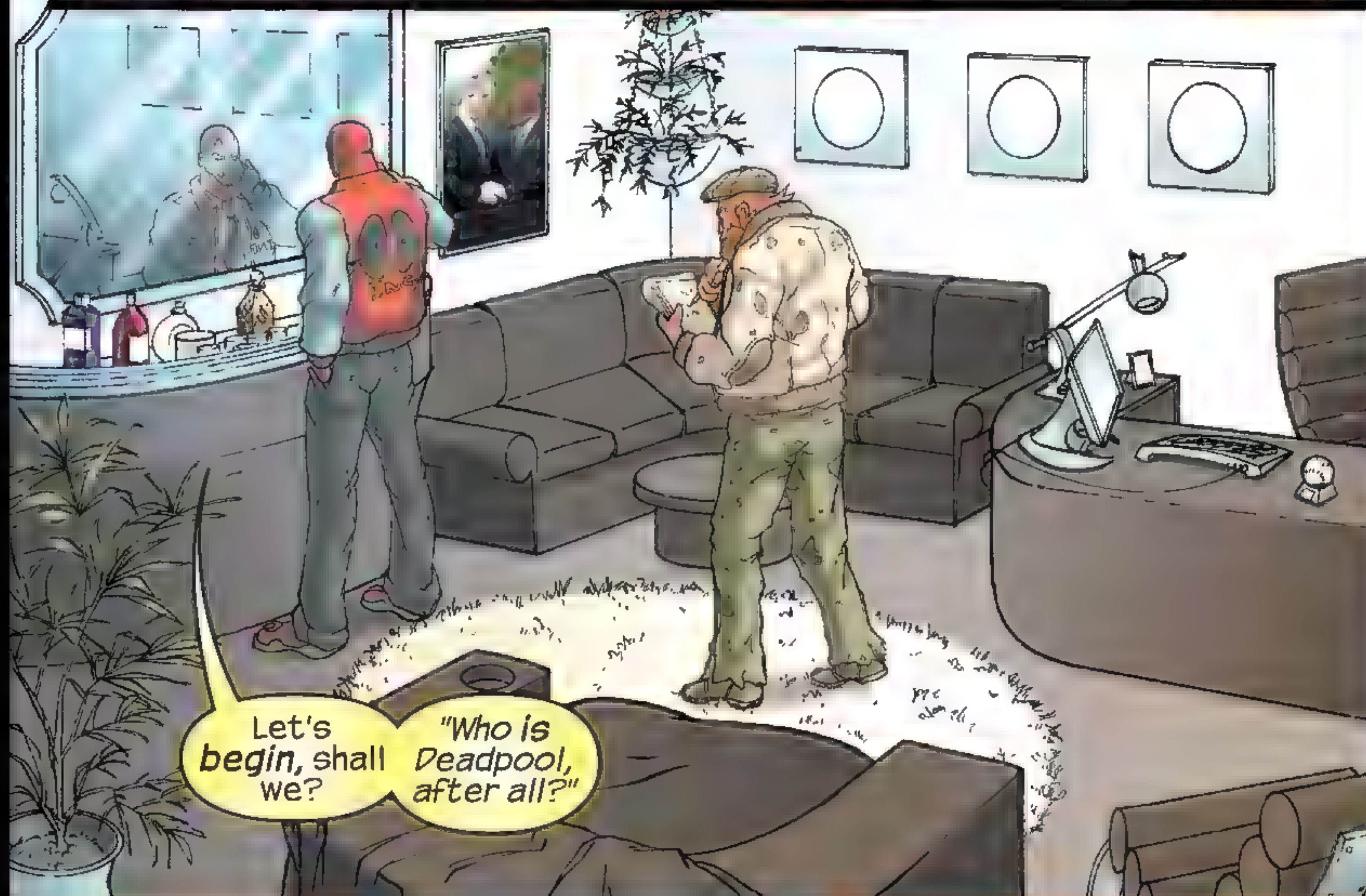
I deserve to get a break. It's about time, is what I say.

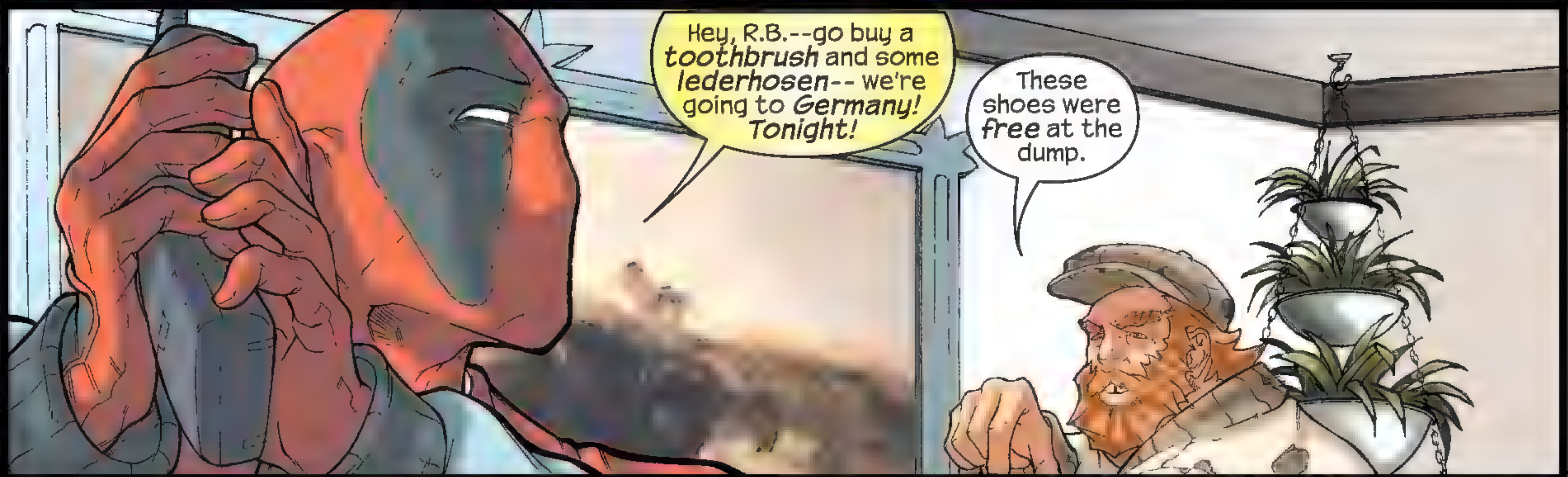
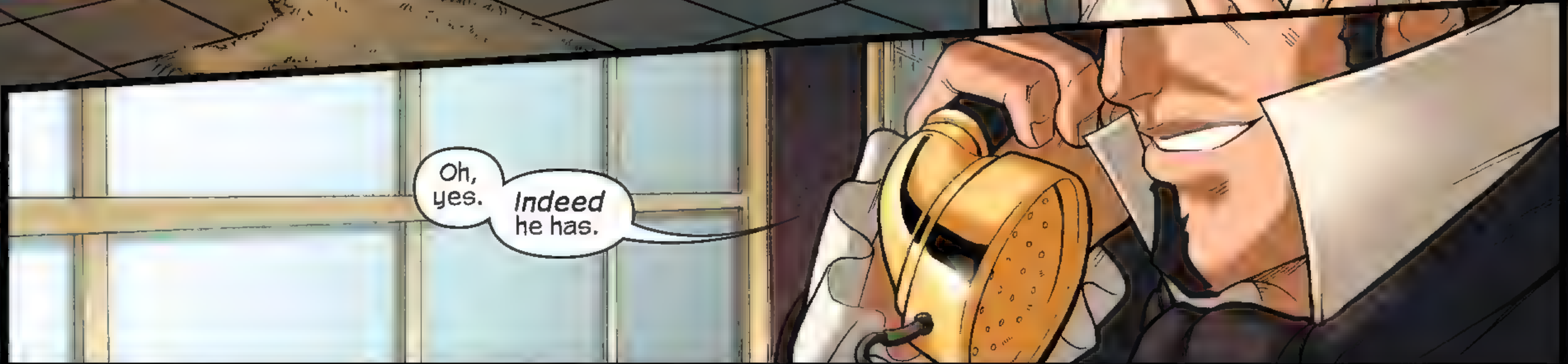
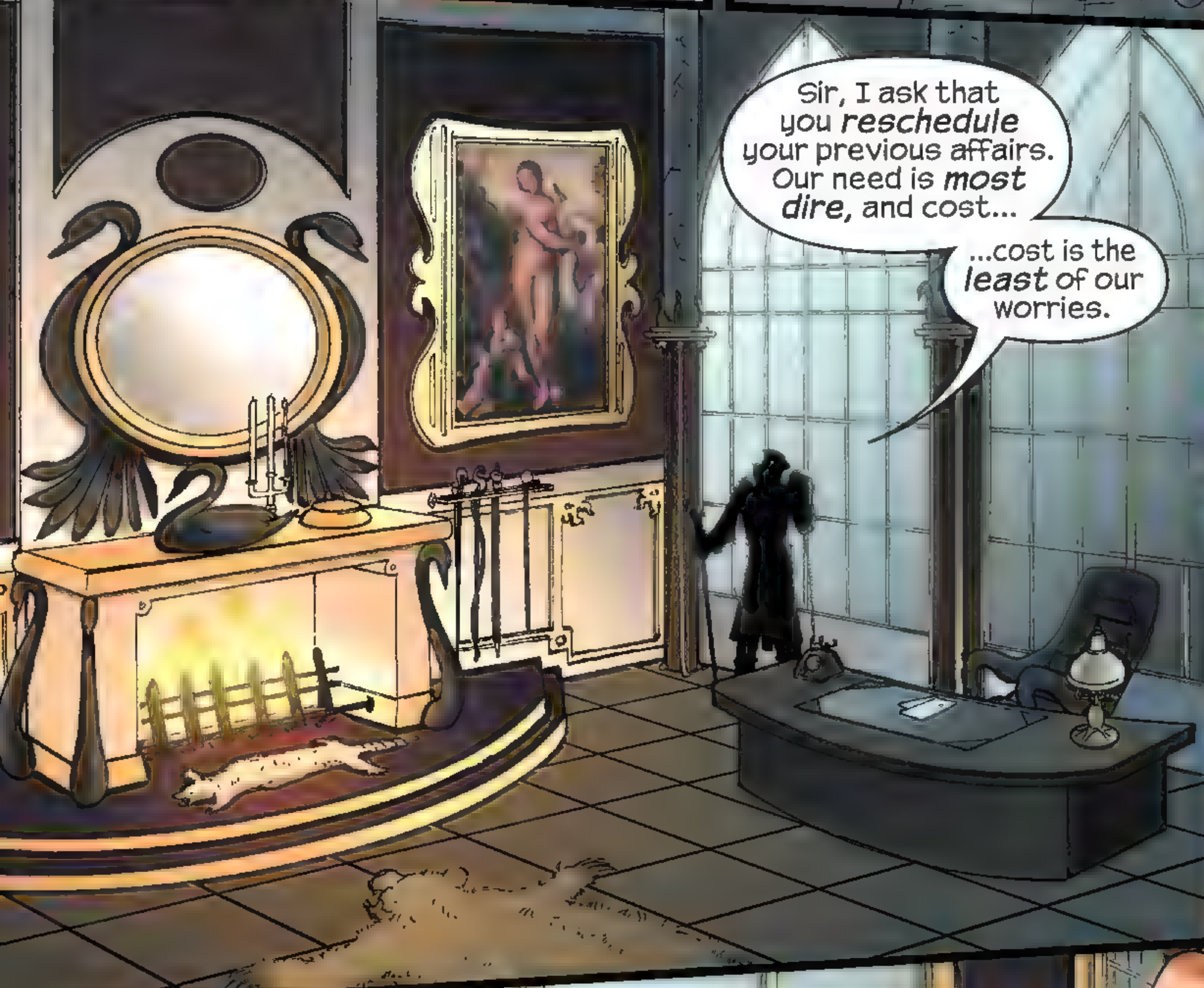
As I've said, Mr. Pool has no time available for mob intimidation until June at the earliest.

So sorry, Mr. Mayor.











"Guy sounds like he needs to be taken out *hard*."

"Yeah, all right. I'll help. I'm in."

"*Outstanding*. I'm wiring a ticket for you immediately. *First class*, of course..."

"Make that *two* tickets... we're having a *special* this week."



Danke, dass sie mit uns geflogen sind!

I don't know *what* you just said, but I'd pay *good money* to hear it again!



"I'll have my man come and drive you to the... *target's castle*."



Ich soll sie zum schloss begleiten. Folgen sie mir bitte.

uh...

Follow me, please.

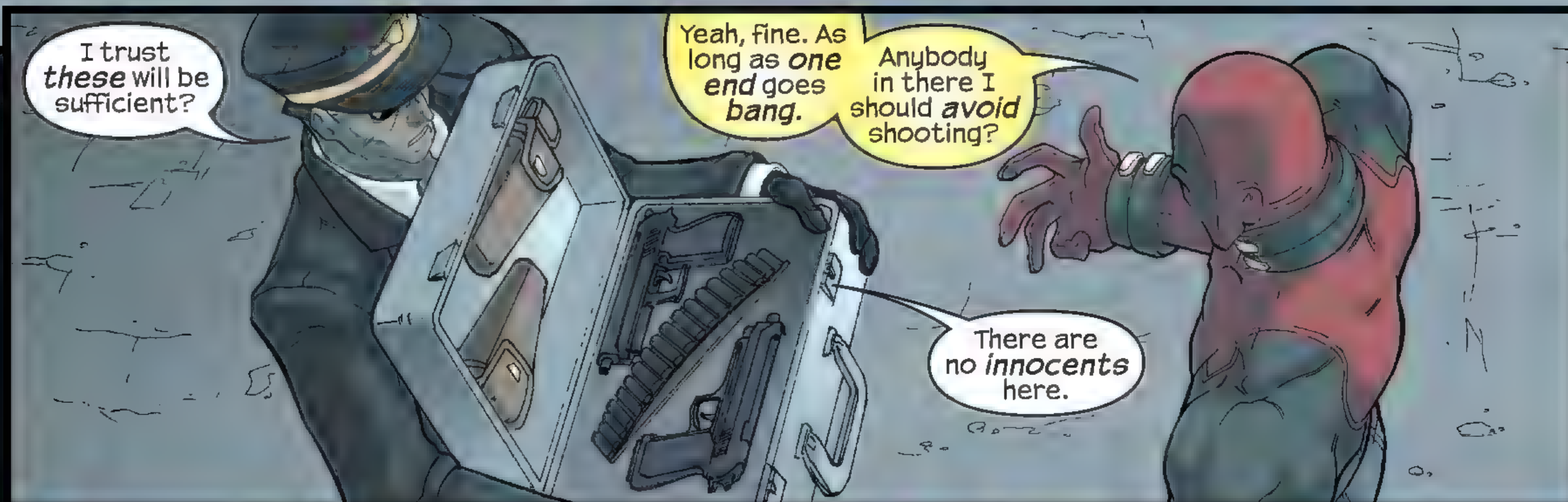
Let's get *one thing* straight. Do you have any food in this country that *isn't* a sausage? I don't want to eat anything that looks like my *lower intestine*.



Hey, you've got a *beautiful* country here. Sincerely.

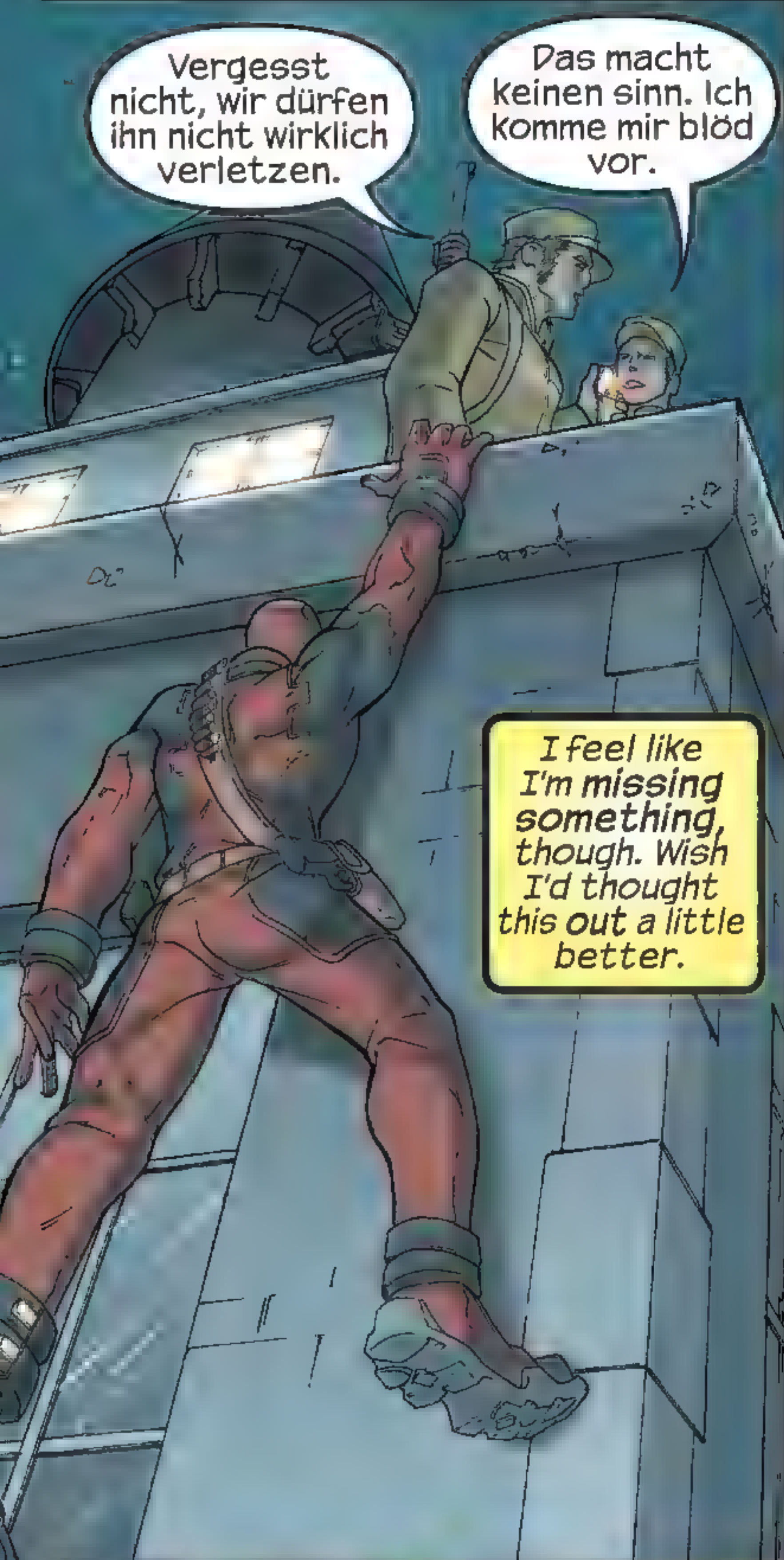
Just makin' conversation. How much *further*?

Be rude, then. And here I'm even using the image inducer so he doesn't see my face and vomit.





Deadpool, master of not actually doing any reconnaissance...



Vergesst nicht, wir dürfen ihn nicht wirklich verletzen.

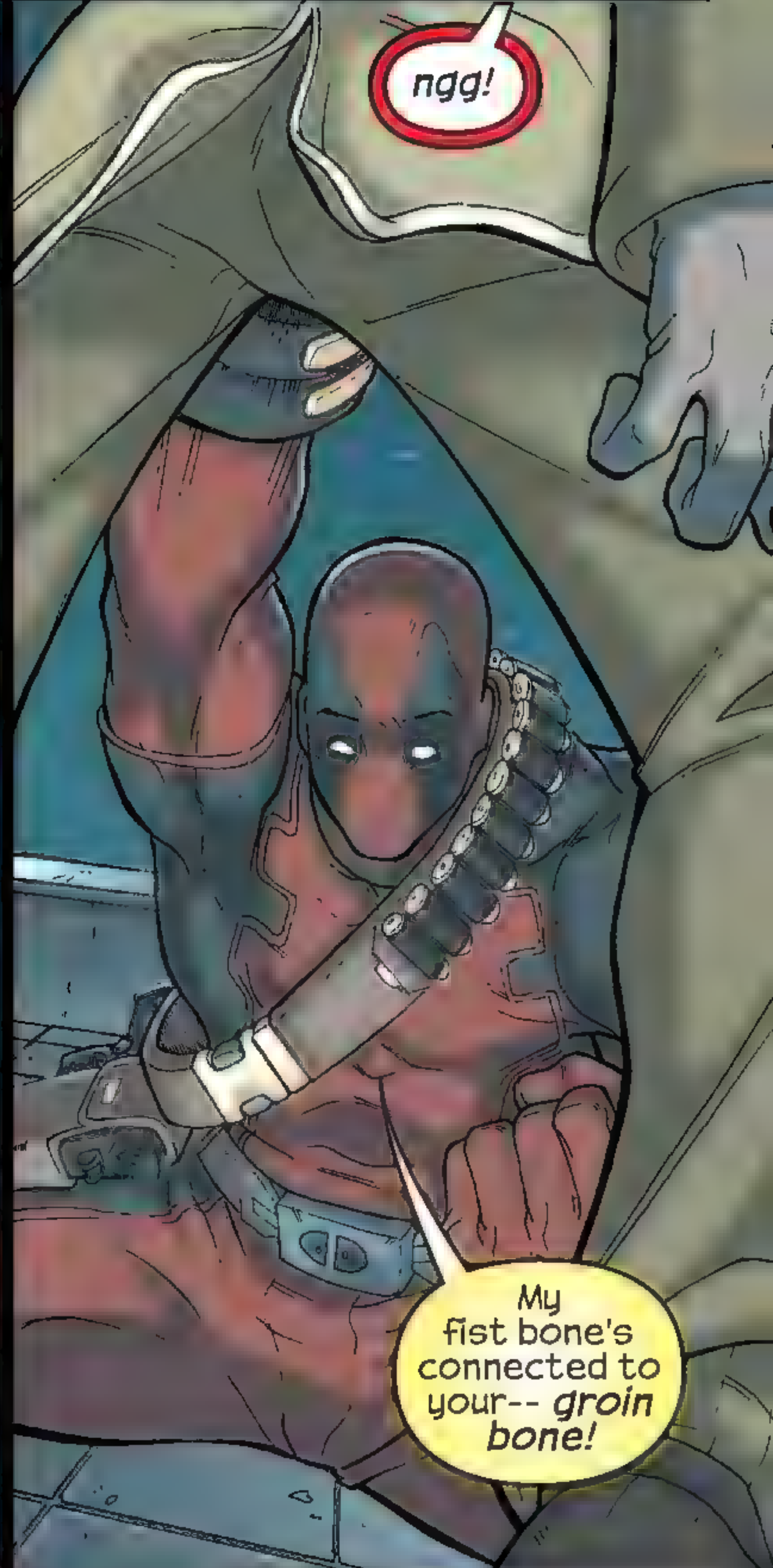
Das macht keinen sinn. Ich komme mir blöd vor.

I feel like I'm missing something, though. Wish I'd thought this out a little better.



ungh!

Oh, my foot bone's connected to your-- face bone!



ngg!

My fist bone's connected to your-- groin bone!



Ooh! Reinforcements. Scary!

TATTA
TATTA
TATTA!

Let's not let this affect our friendship, okay?



What's the matter? There's no splatter.

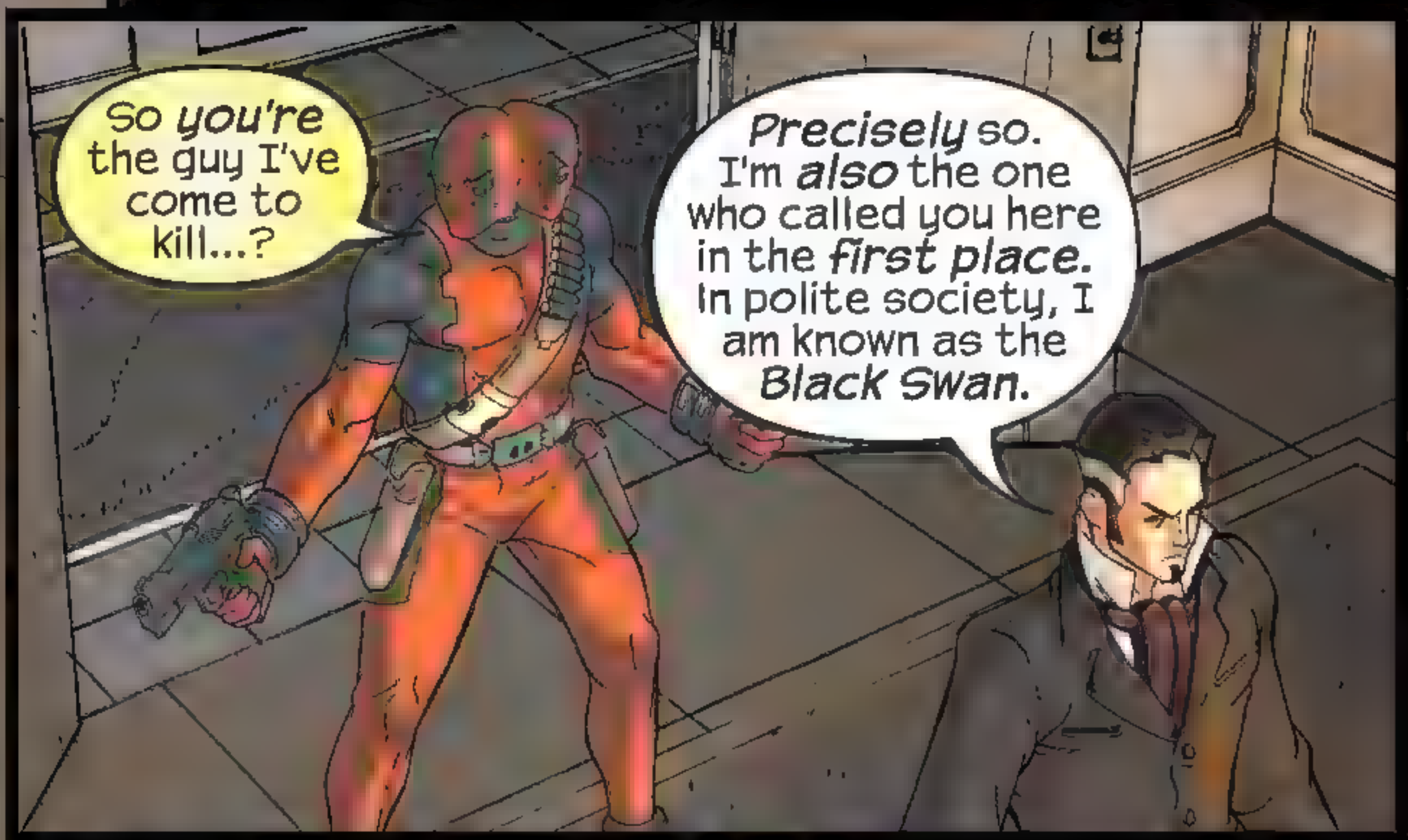
Something's wrong here...

Ah. The famous *Deadpool*. How very fearsome you are.

Won't you come in, please?



I've been waiting for you.



So you're the guy I've come to kill...?

Precisely so. I'm *also* the one who called you here in the *first place*. In polite society, I am known as the *Black Swan*.



Don't bother. The bullets are blanks.

All right. So, what's the *deal*?



The 'deal' is... I don't *like* you, Wilson.

The 'deal'?



The 'deal' is... assassination used to be a *noble* profession. My family has been accepting contracts for *three hundred years*.

Can you even *imagine*?

Wha--?

PLACK!

PLACK!



This is a business for *gentlemen*, Wilson. Not mask-wearing buffoons.

Why can't I move my arms?



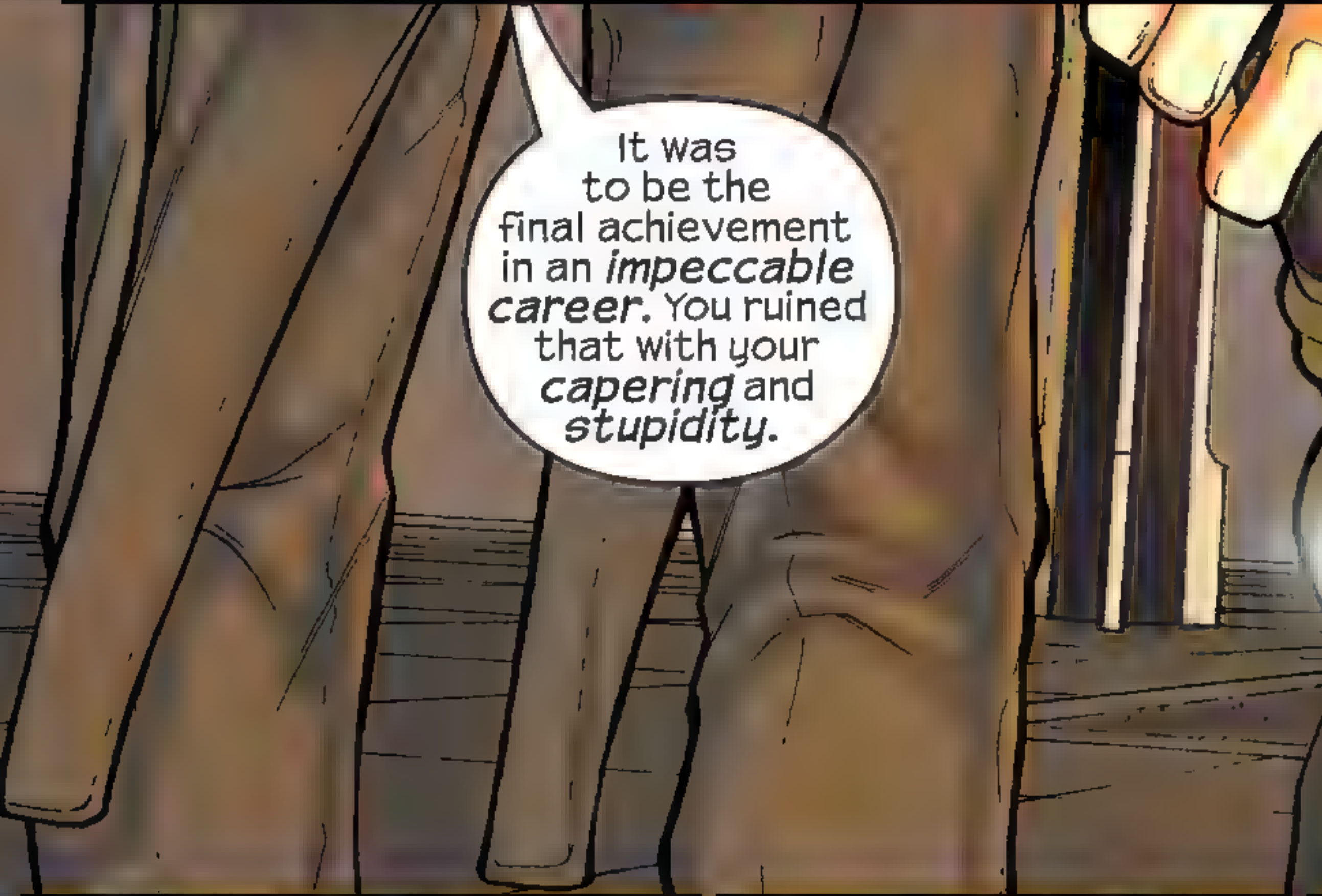
The blood of monarchs runs in my veins, Wilson. You *defile* what I do. You make it *vulgar* and *coarse*.

What's happening to me?

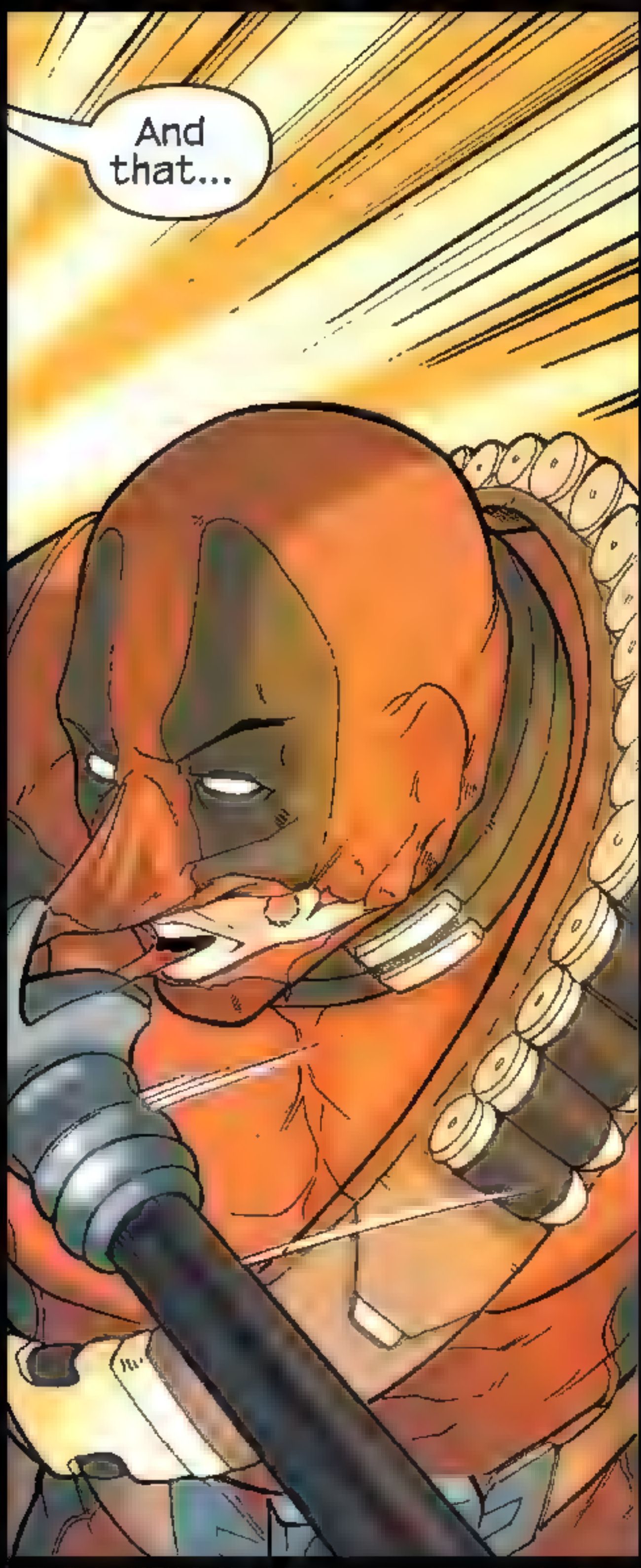
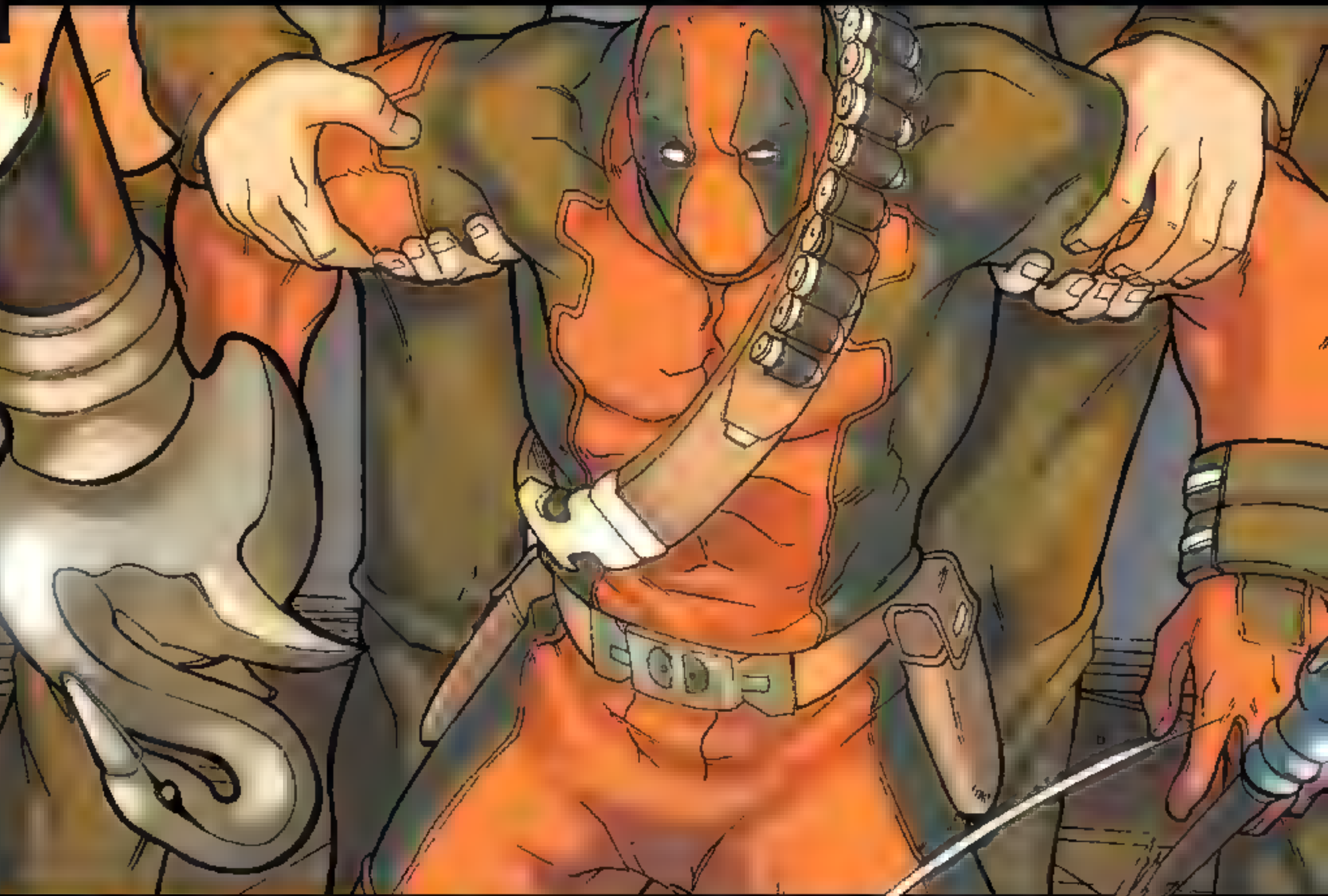


Hold him up, please.

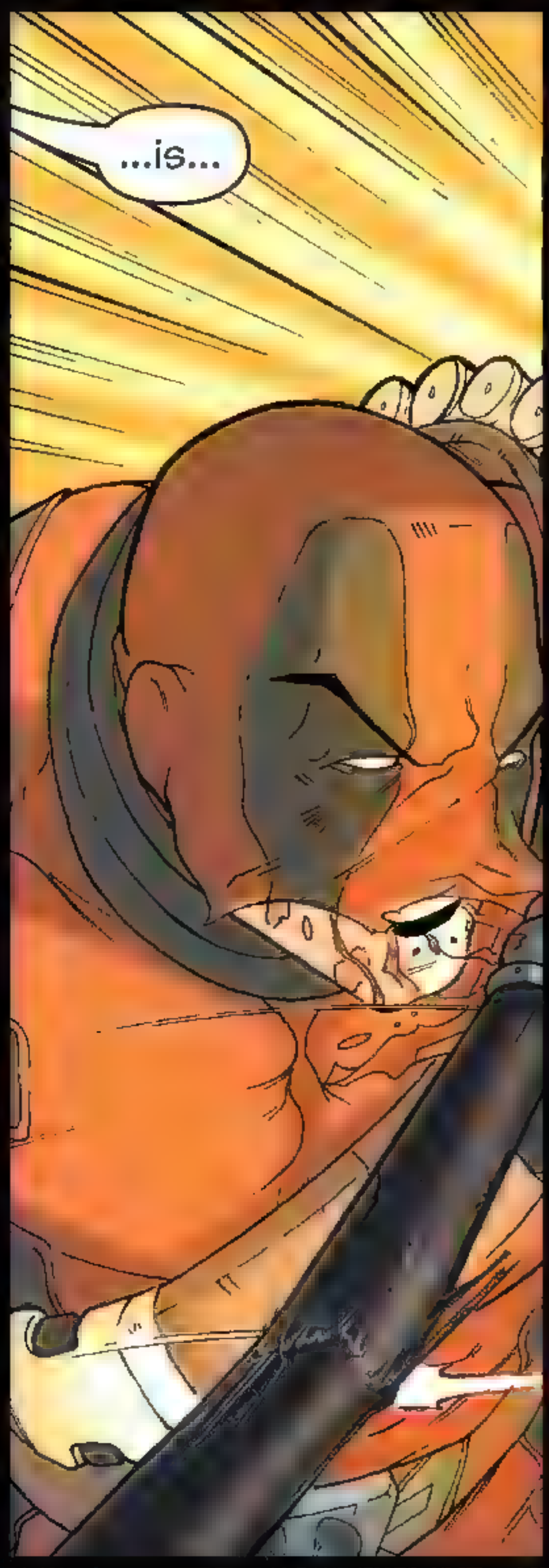
The *Four Winds*. That was the final straw. I had accepted a contract to eliminate them all.



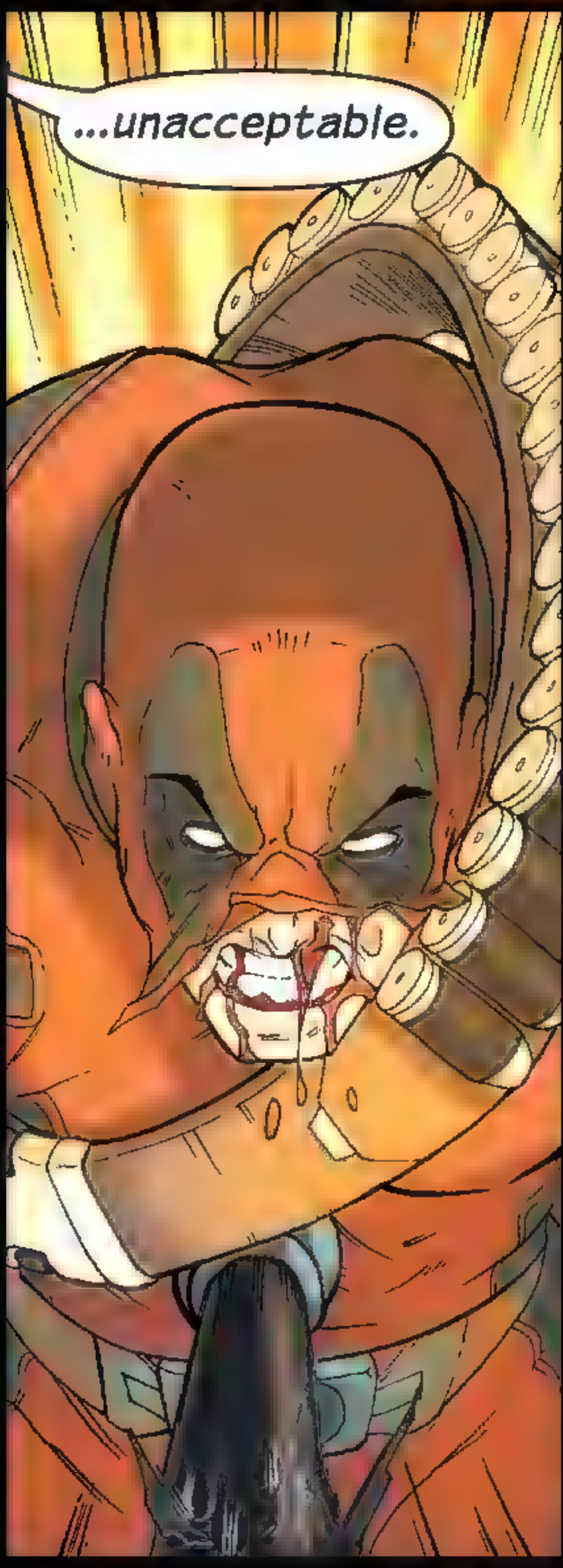
It was to be the final achievement in an *impeccable* career. You ruined that with your *capering* and *stupidity*.



And that...



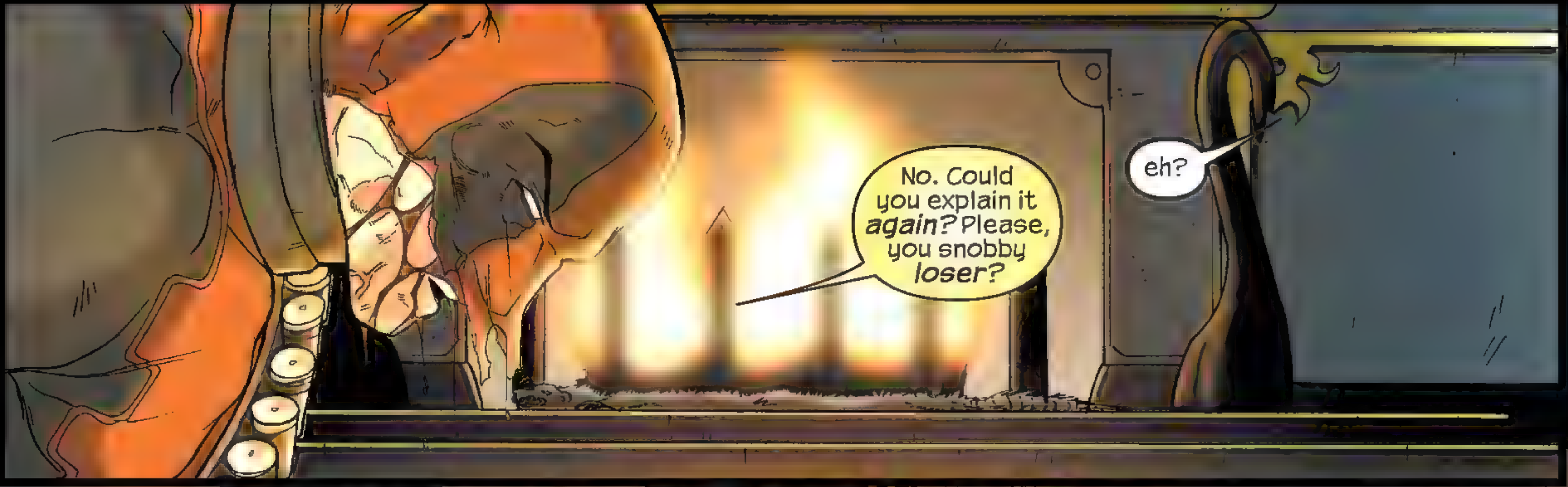
...is...

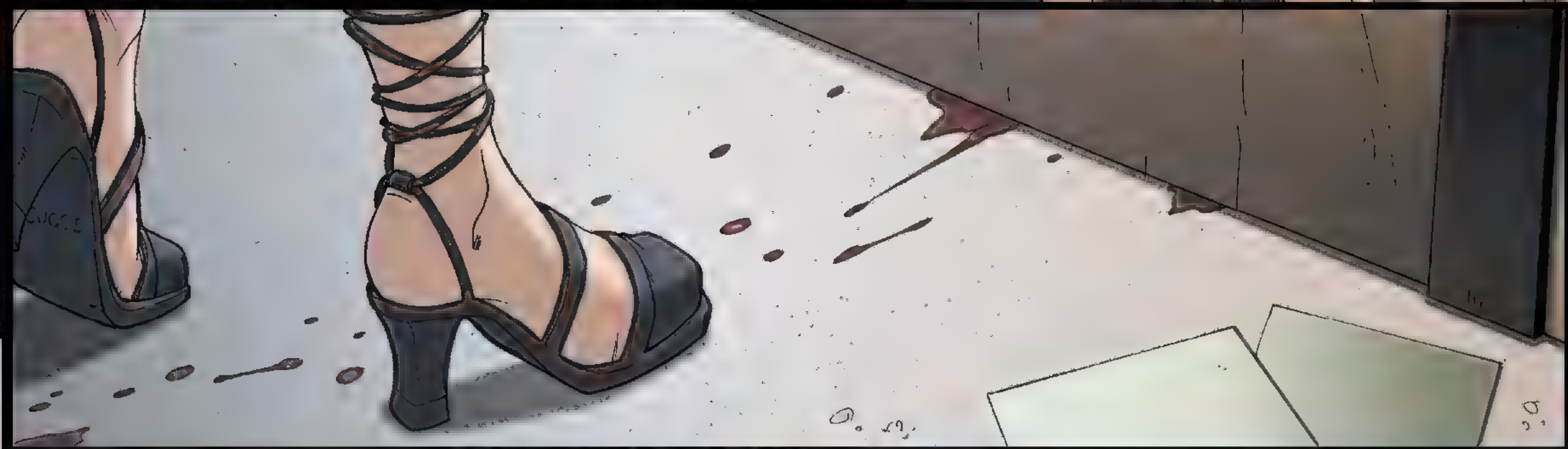


...unacceptable.



Do you understand, Wilson?





DEADPOOL®

66

SIMONE UDON



Hello, little
light in the sky.

Please don't
probe me.

Wait. I know
what that is.

Why am
I...?

Huh. Someone's tying
me up. How *nice*.

And this 'someone'
smells *great*.

Lotta guys
pay *good*
money for
this...

Good knotting
technique, too.
Bet she's a
sailor.

Wait. Something's
happening here--

Sorry
about this, Mr.
Wilson ...

You all
know me:

Deadpool! Last survivor of a
doomed planet that was bitten
by a radioactive spider and then
doused in cosmic rays and garlic,
which some people like, but I think
ruins the flavor --

-- wait, hold on,
that's not right.

Whoever roughed me up and
left me here did something
to my *brain*. The last thing
I remember is...*urgh*. I don't
even *remember* what I remember.

If I *scream*, will you
call me a *sissy*?

Pull!

Stuttering
Stanley!
Stuttering
Stanley!

What wilt thou do,
thou peevish officer?
Hast thou delight to
see a wretched man
do outrage and
displeasure to himself?
--The Comedy Of Errors

"Please stop hitting
me with anvils."
-- Wile E. Coyote

HEALING FACTOR

CHAPTER ONE

I FORGET

Story by
Gail Simone

Art by Udon with Alvin Lee,
Rob Ross, Eric Vedder, A-Zero & LTRZ

Udon Chief
Erik Ko

Letters by
Dave Sharpe

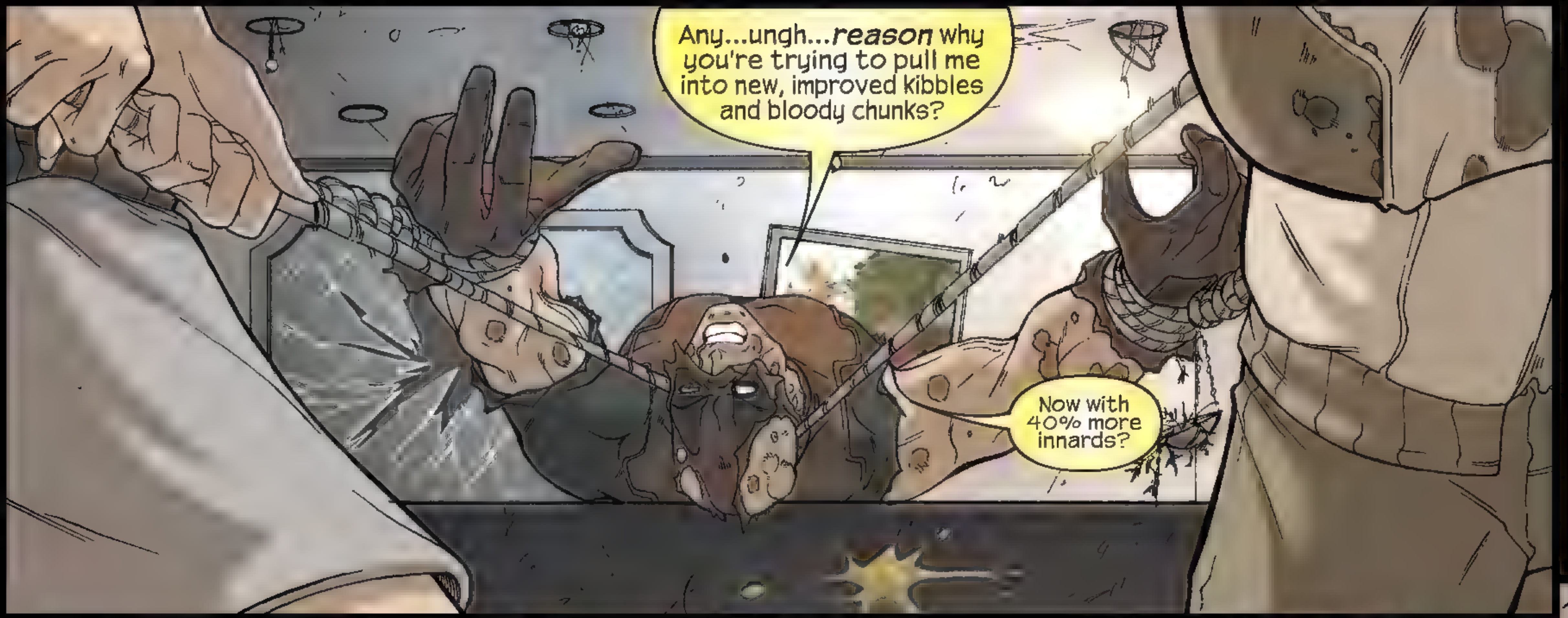
Edited by
Mike Marts

Assisted by
Mike Raicht

Chief
Joe Quesada

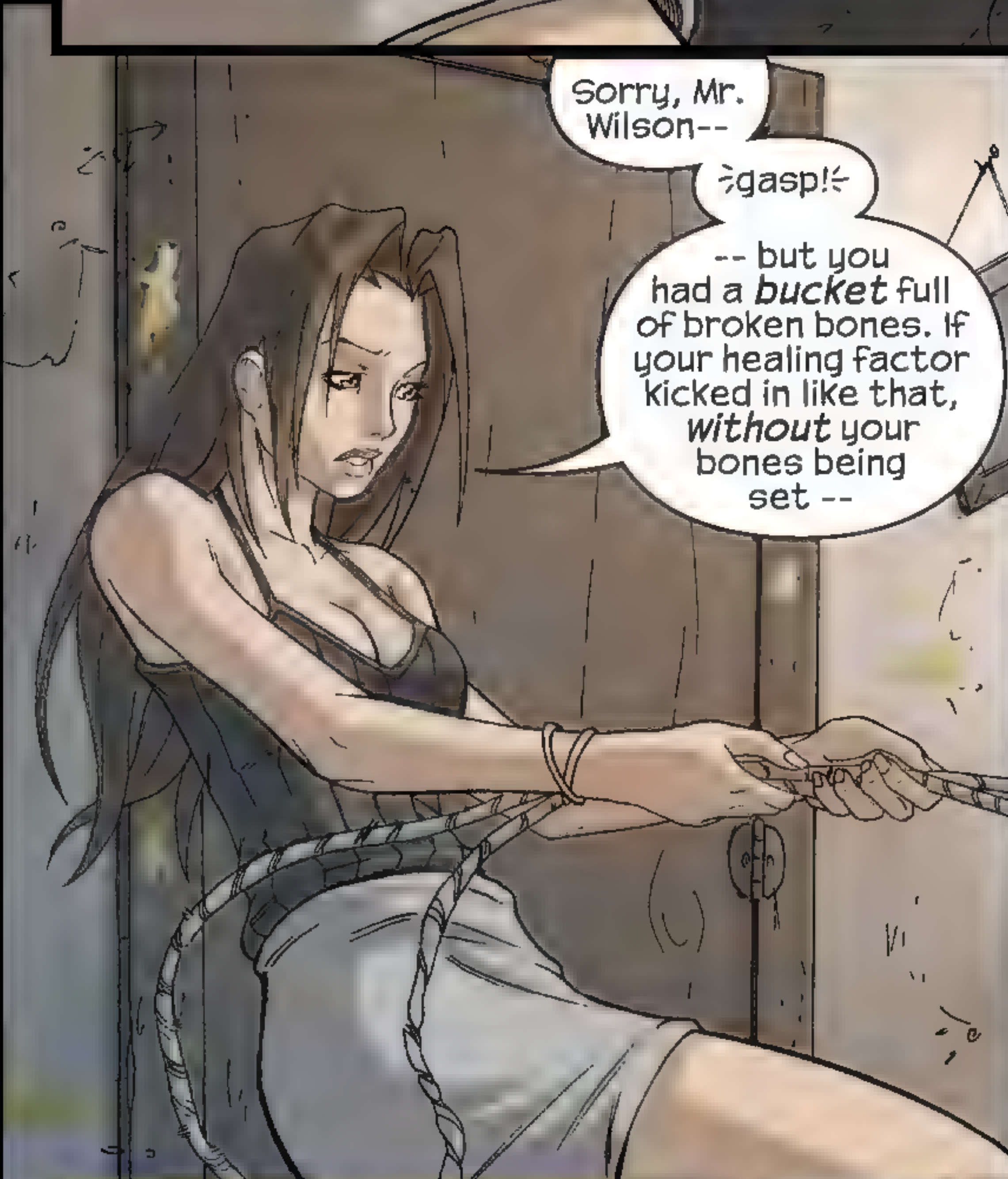
President
Bill Jemas

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Any...ungh...*reason* why you're trying to pull me into new, improved kibbles and bloody chunks?

Now with 40% more innards?



Sorry, Mr. Wilson--

>gasp!<

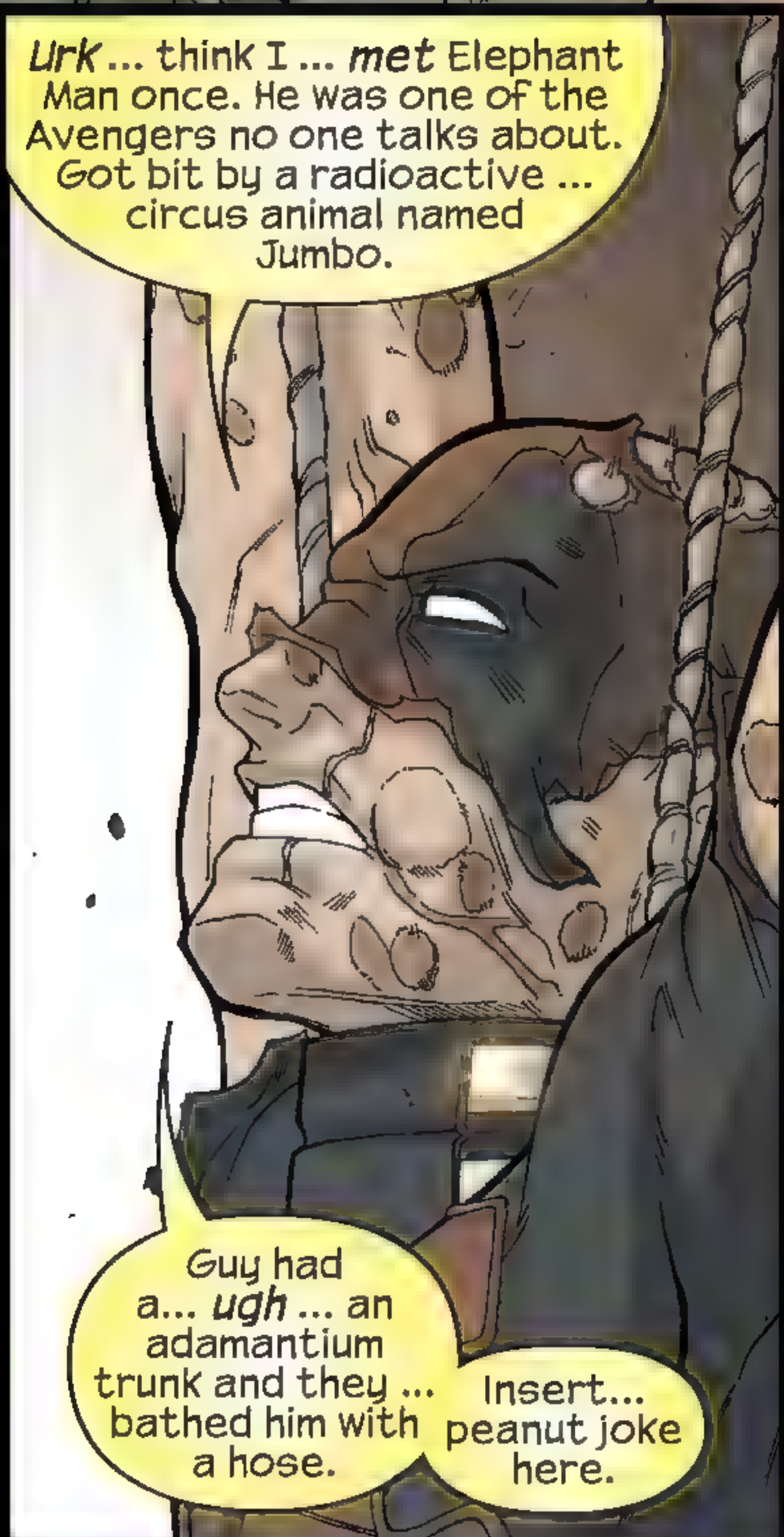
-- but you had a *bucket* full of broken bones. If your healing factor kicked in like that, *without* your bones being set --



Blow the house down!

-- *exactly.*

You'd look like the elephant man's *uglier* brother.



Urk... think I ... *met* Elephant Man once. He was one of the Avengers no one talks about. Got bit by a radioactive ... circus animal named Jumbo.

Guy had a... *ugh* ... an adamantium trunk and they ... bathed him with a hose.

Insert... peanut joke here.



...
...is this one of those in-and-out, drive-through tortures, or is this gonna... *take* a while?

Try to relax. It won't be long.



A couple -- three hours *max.*

Good ol' *Sandi*. Best Personal-Assistant Slash Sadist-Chiropractor I *ever* hired.



Guess I should thank you. Any *clue* how I got here ... and do I have any *hickeys*?

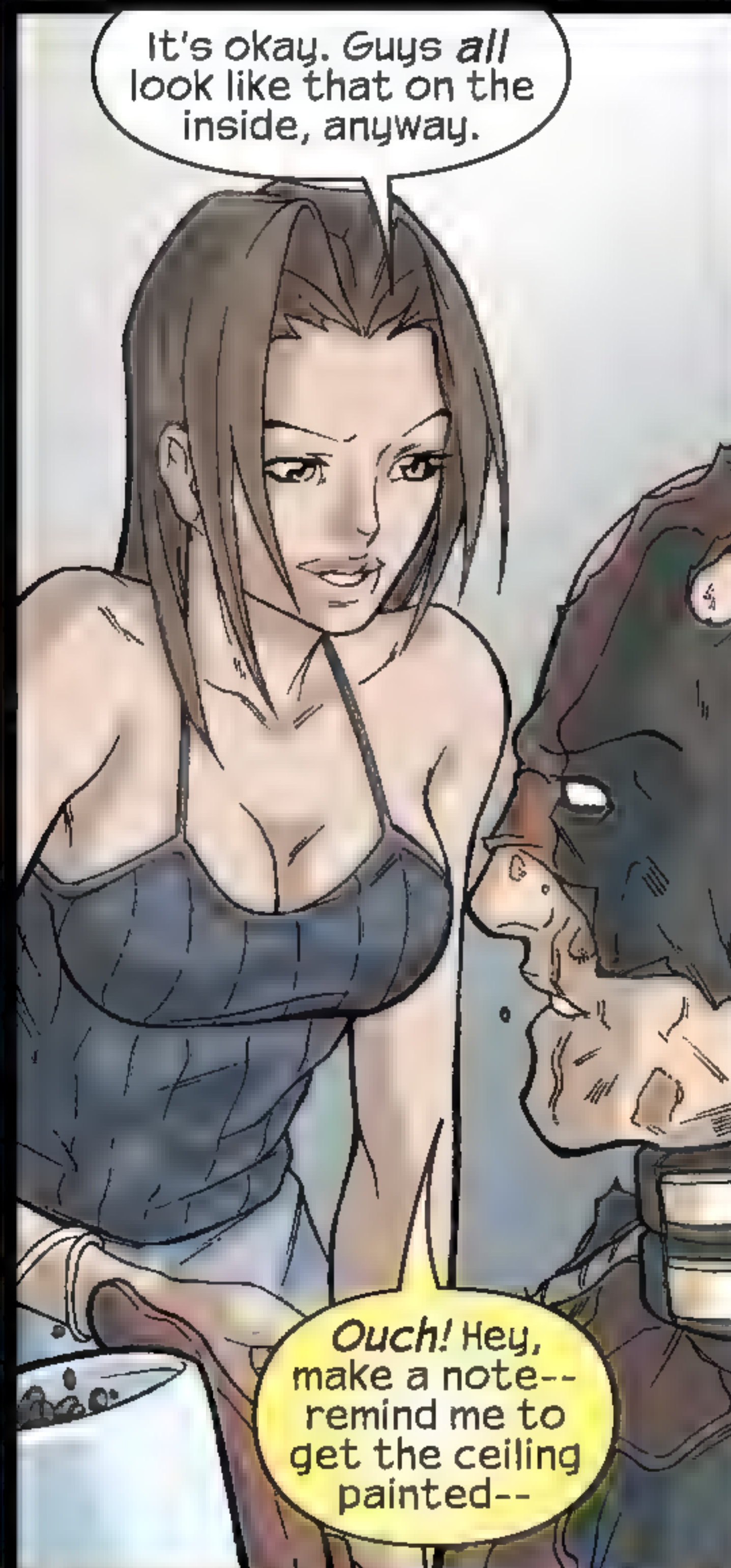
You don't *remember*? Well, you *are* awfully feverish.

Oh, look, Mr. Bag is bringing you some coffee.



Yeah, but it woulda been nicer if he'd mixed some *water* in with it. ~munch munch chew~

Sorry you had to see me *without* my image inducer, Sandi. I always tried to spare you that.



It's okay. Guys *all* look like that on the inside, anyway.

Ouch! Hey, make a note-- remind me to get the ceiling painted--



"...get the ceiling painted--"

"--and get the *bugs* cleaned out of my light fixture."



So, you don't remember how you got here?

Nope.

Or where you've been?

That's a big *negative*, good buddy.

And you're not *worried* about that?

Worried? Why should I be *worried*?



My whole life is like a rainbow.



Ah, there's my little image inducer. Thanks, ratbag.

I love the night life. I've got a booger.

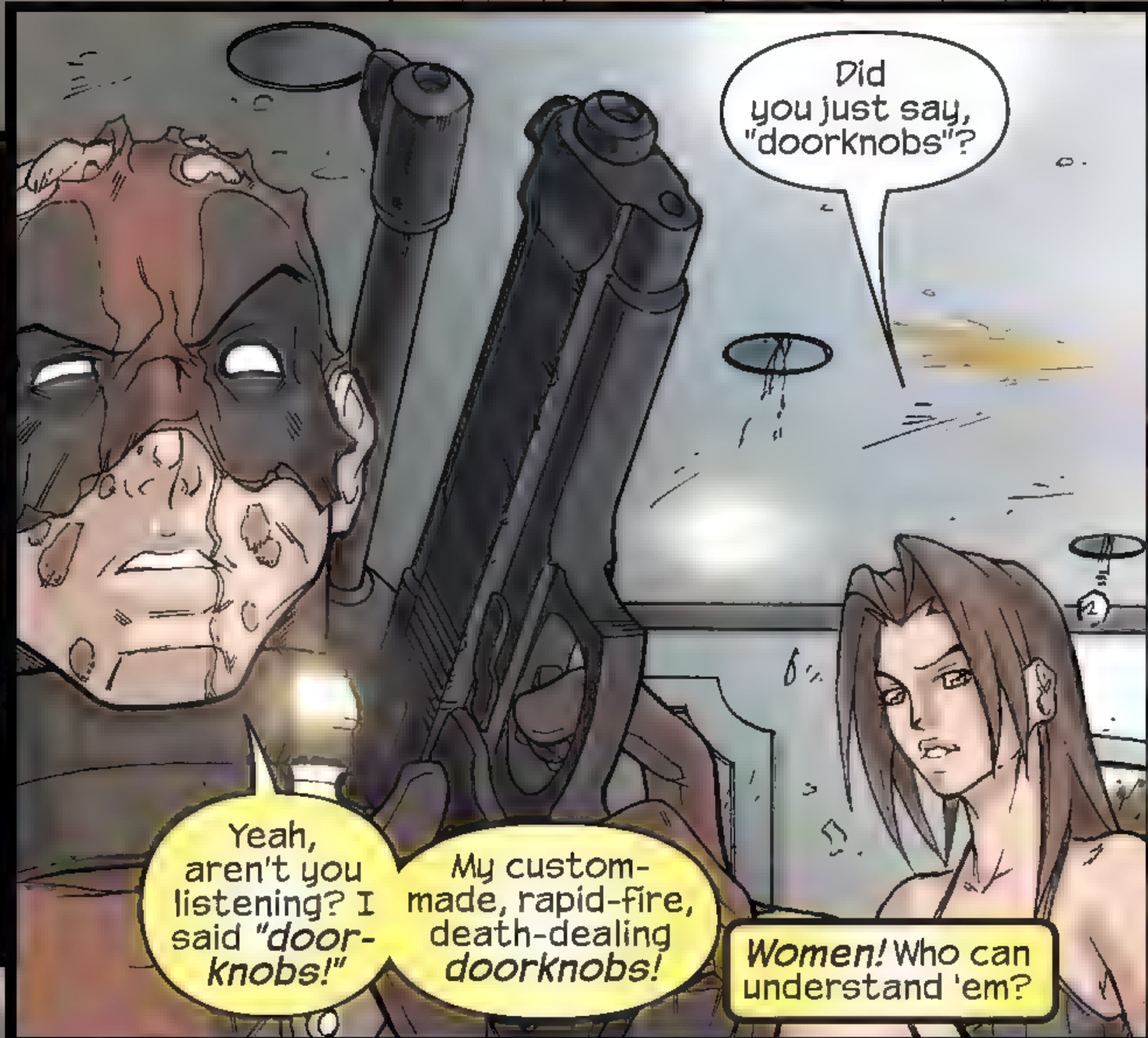
You said it. Now that I've got my **doorknobs**, we're back in business! Sandi, what's on my schedule for tonight?



Man, I'm **starving**. I know I left some **sushi** in here a few days ago ...

Just the Whittaker job, Mr. Wilson.

But listen, maybe you should take it **easy** for a couple a' days, huh? I mean, you don't quite seem yourse--



Did you just say, "doorknobs"?

Yeah, aren't you listening? I said "**door-knobs**!"

My custom-made, rapid-fire, death-dealing **doorknobs**!

Women! Who can understand 'em?

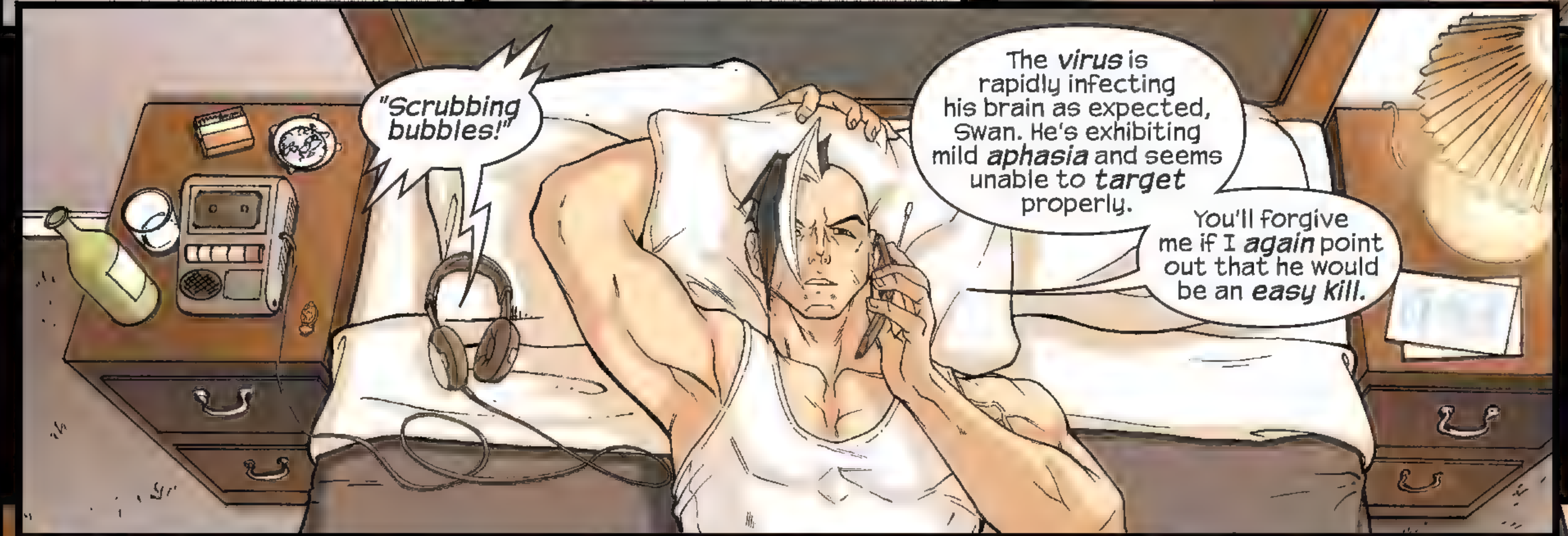


Ratbag, I appreciate the thought, but last time I ate peanuts, I woke up looking like **this**.

Mr. Wilson, no kidding... I think maybe you should see a **doctor**... like, **yesterday**.



Sandi, I'm **fine**! I'm **A-1**! I'm floating on a **gossamer cloud**!

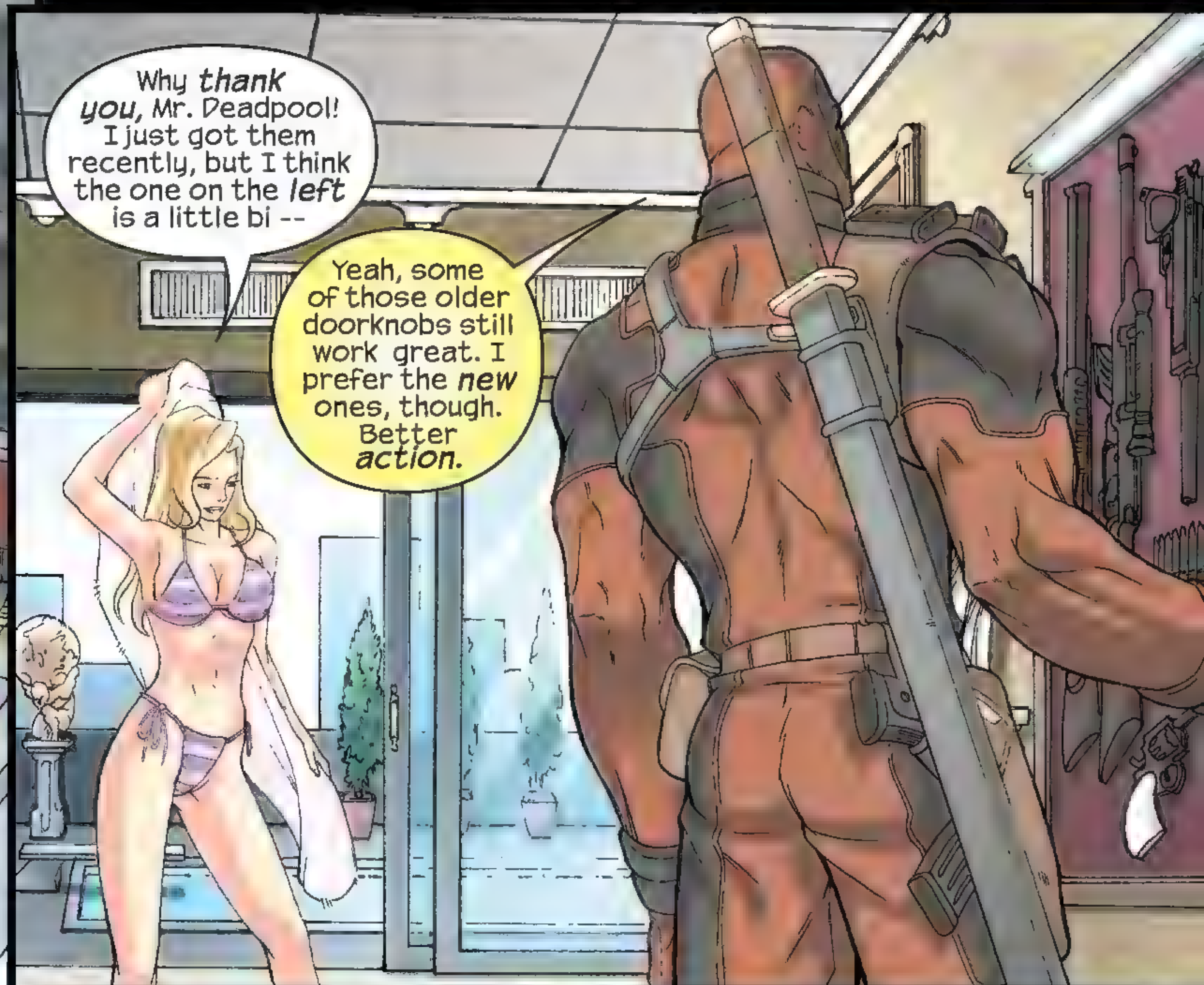


At one of the many penthouses of the very wealthy Mr. Whittaker.

Nice door-knobs.

Why thank you, Mr. Deadpool! I just got them recently, but I think the one on the left is a little bi --

Yeah, some of those older doorknobs still work great. I prefer the *new* ones, though. Better action.

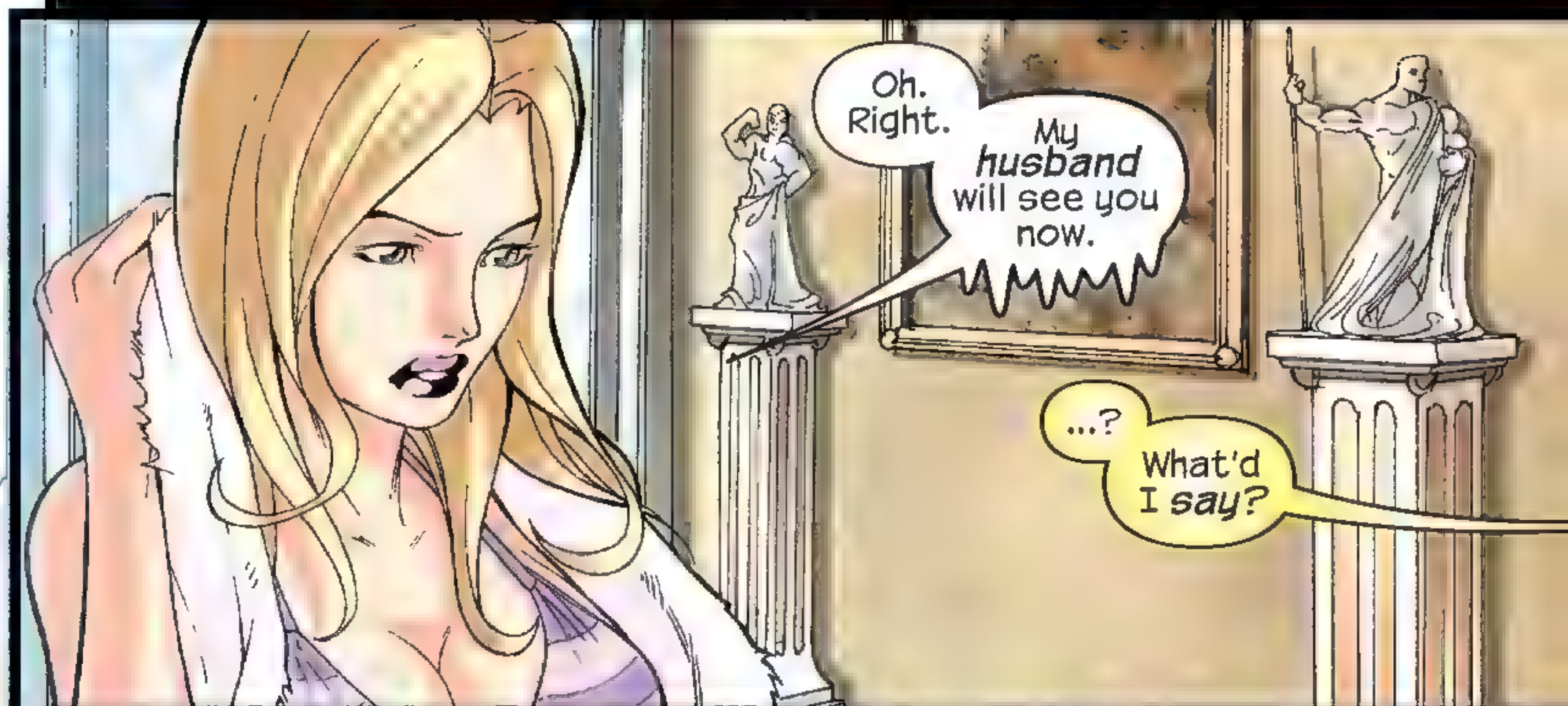


Oh. Right.

My husband will see you now.

...?

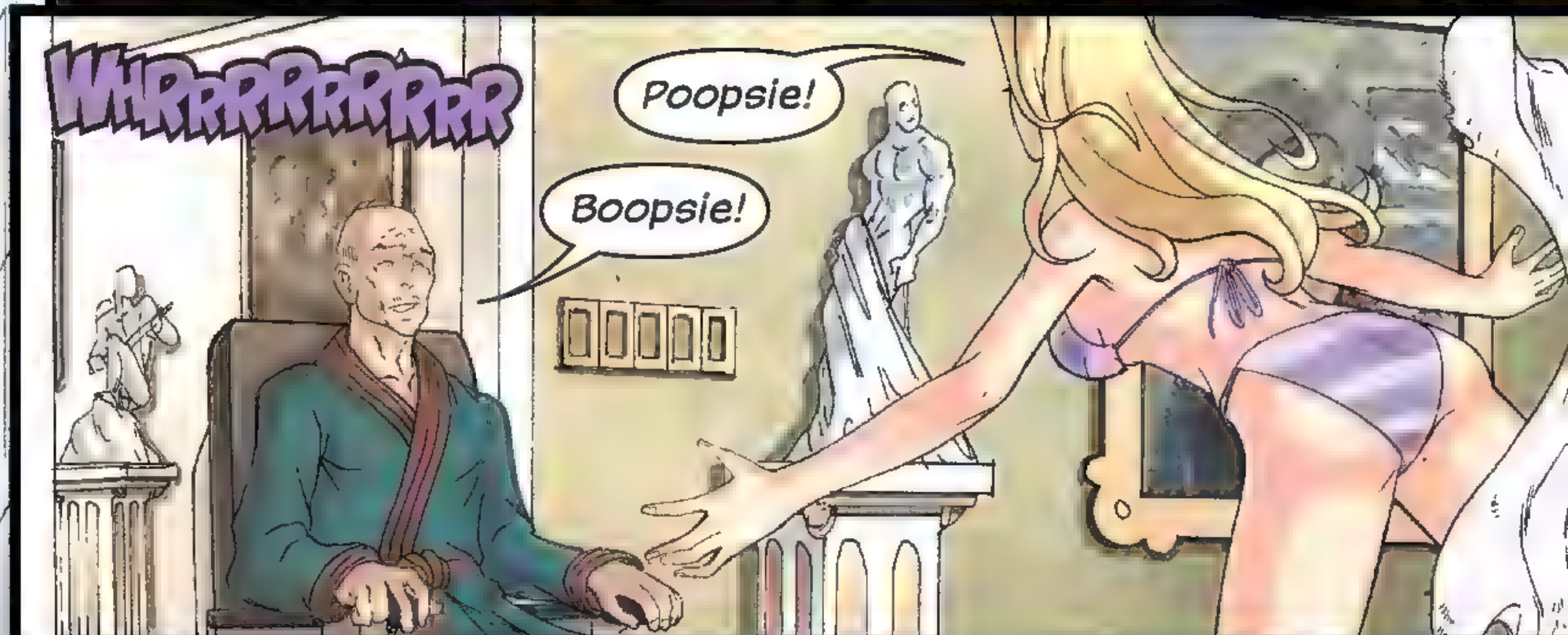
What'd I say?



WHRRRRRRRRRR

Poopsie!

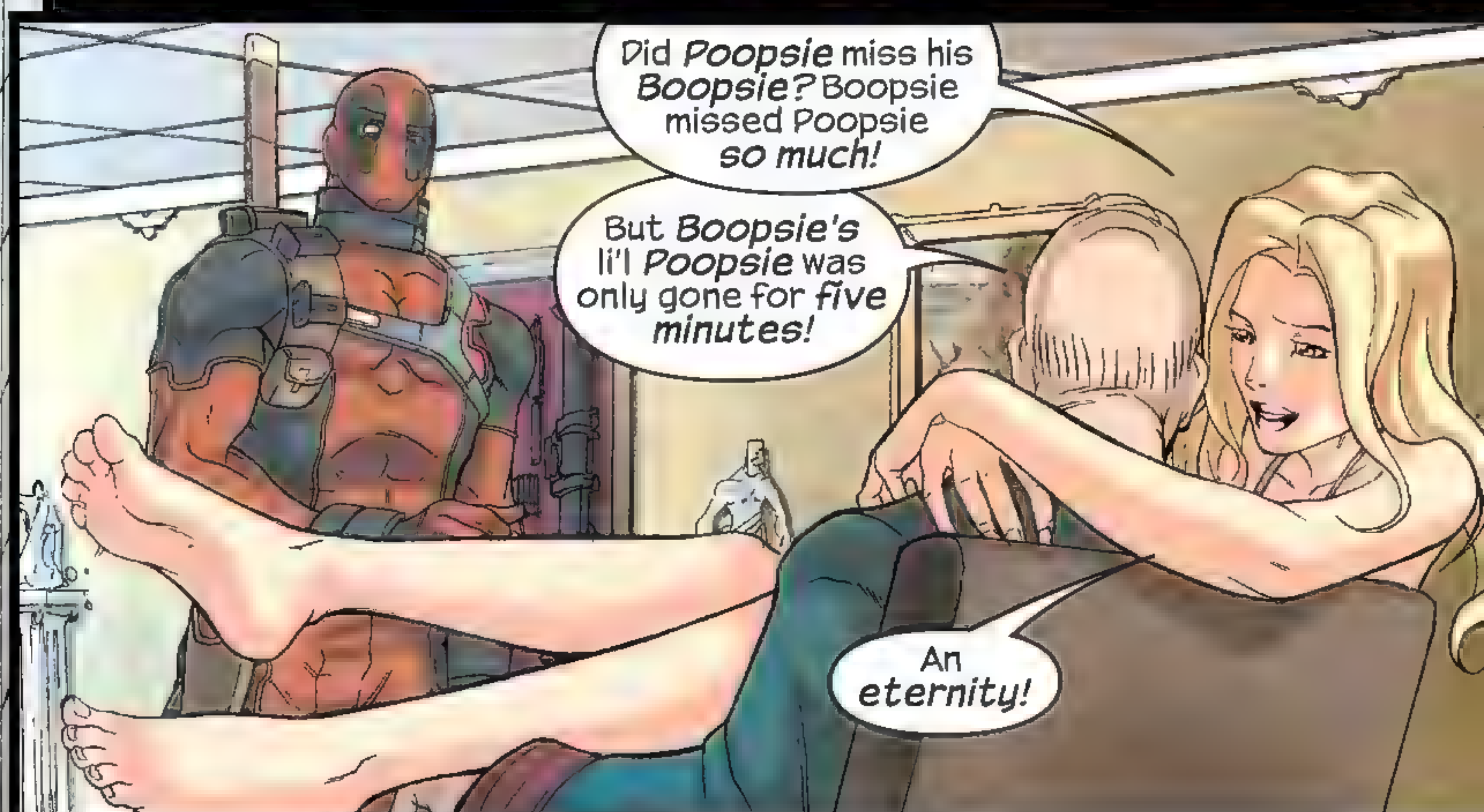
Boopsie!

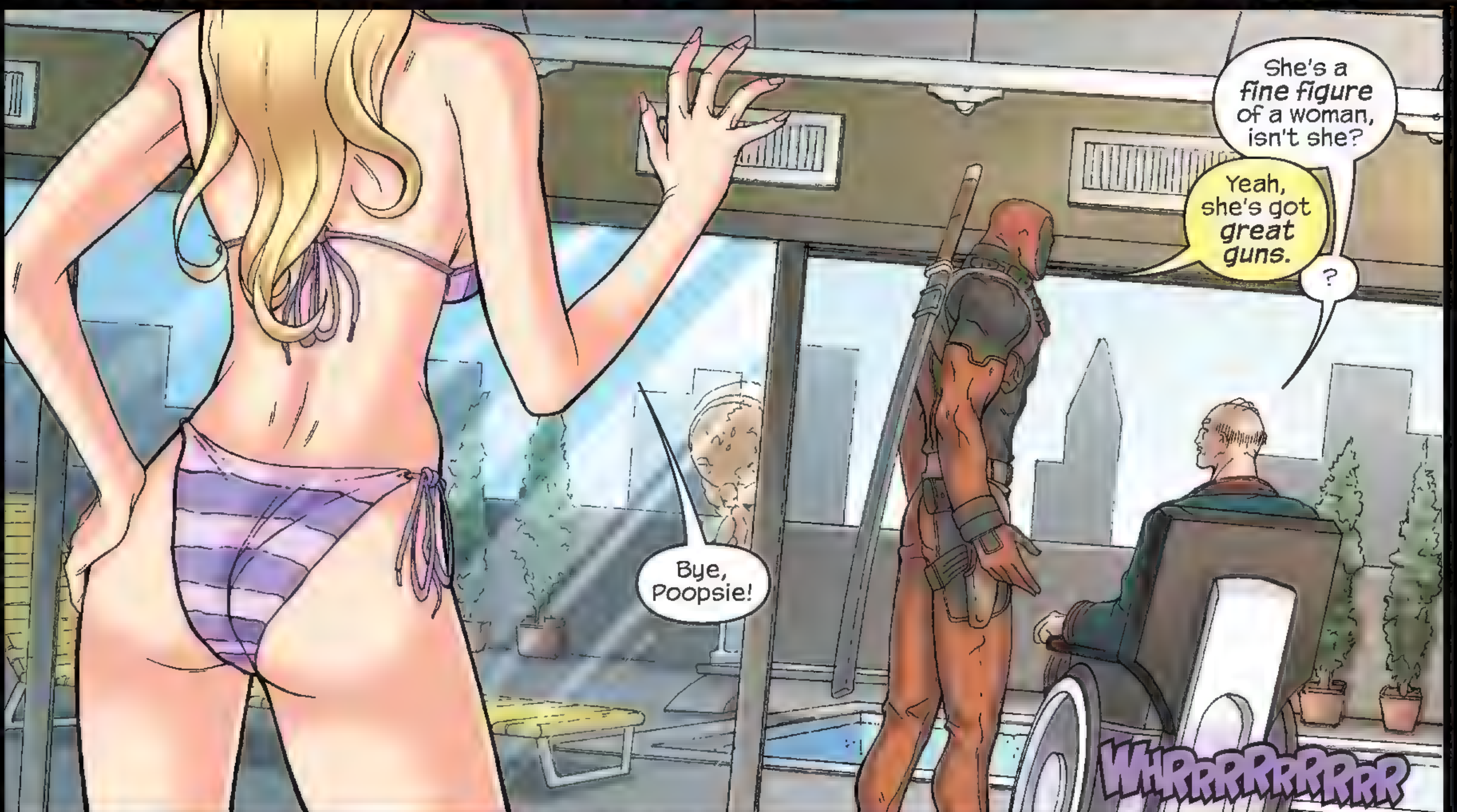
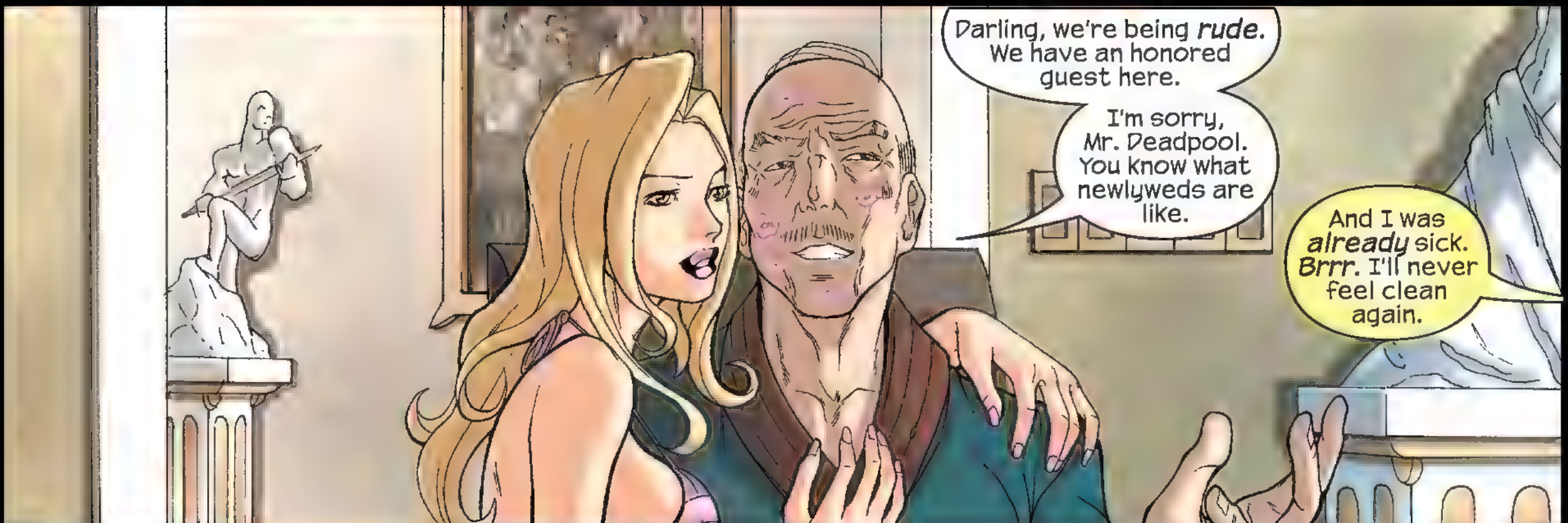
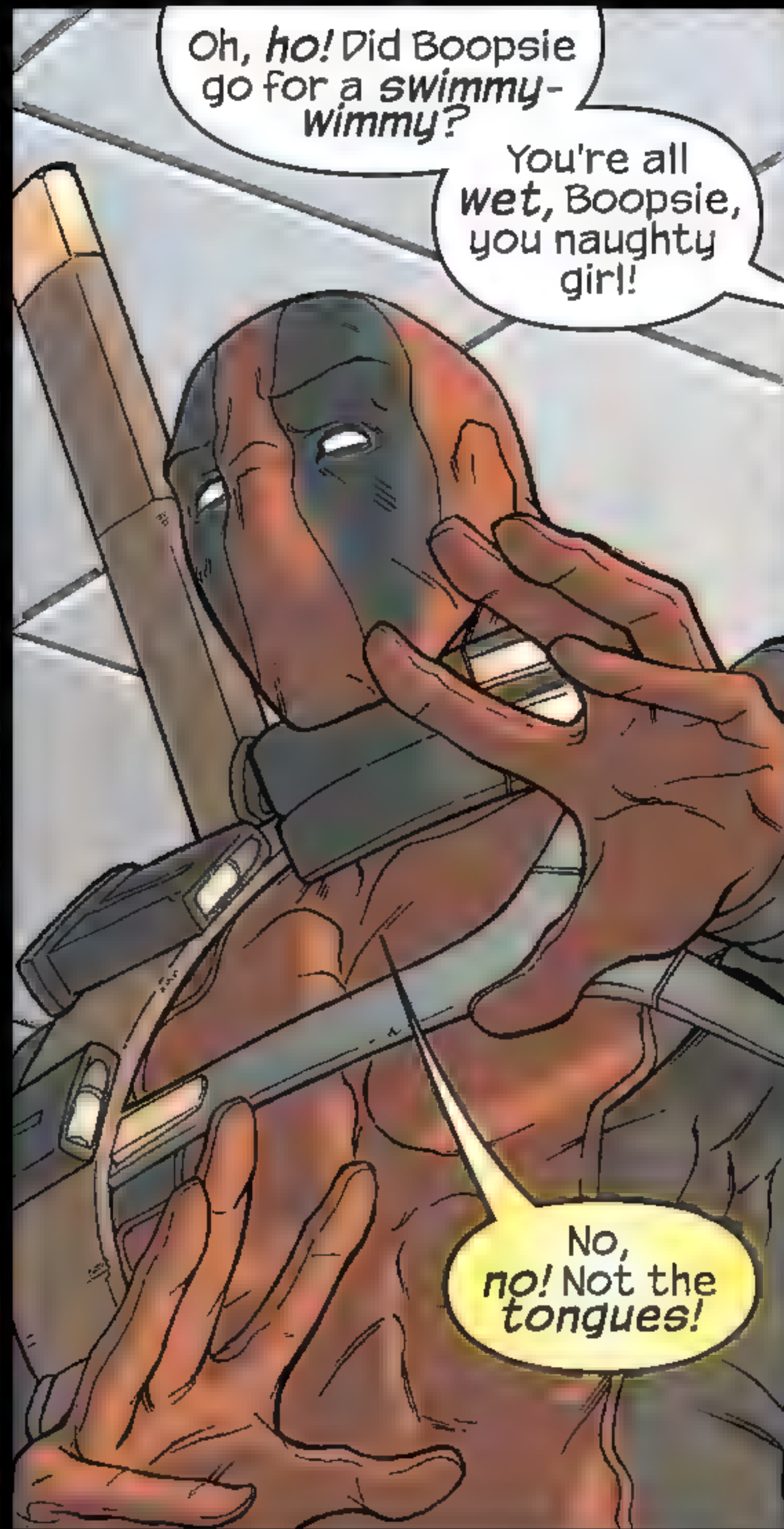


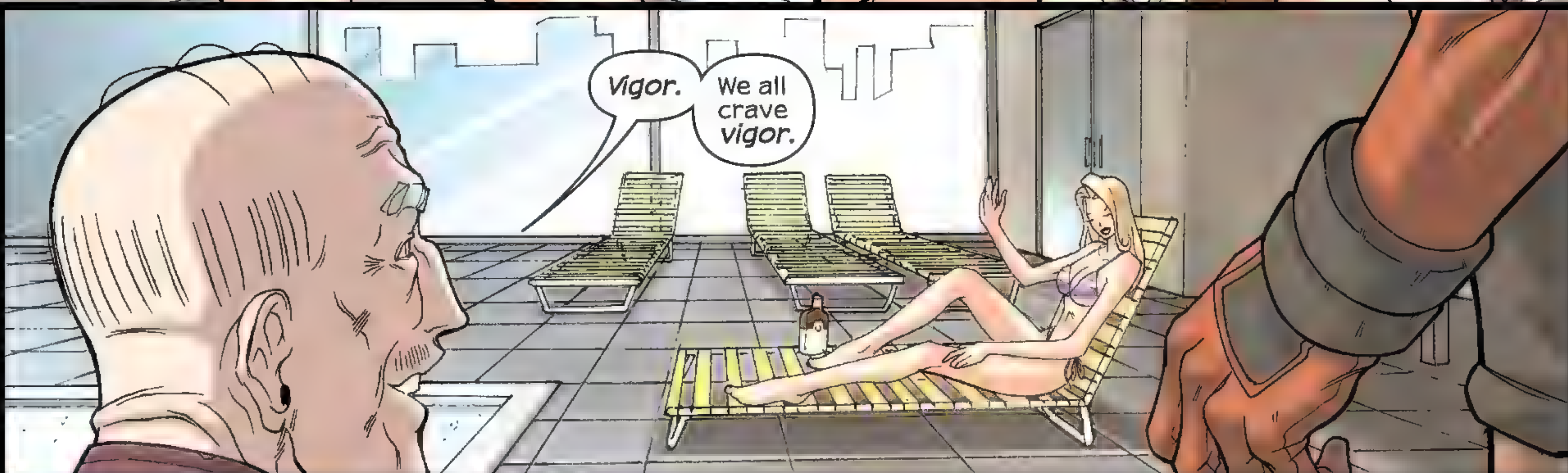
Did Poopsie miss his Boopsie? Boopsie missed Poopsie so much!

But Boopsie's li'l Poopsie was only gone for five minutes!

An eternity!









"But it will *not* be an easy task, Mr. Deadpool. Choose your *tools* carefully."



"The owner of this item will be *loathe* to part with it, I'm sure."

"You will inform me of your progress via this cellular phone."



"Make no mistake--it is a *ferocious* beast you hunt. Best to capture it unaware, in its natural habitat..."

Knock, knock!

KA-THUNK!



"The Rhino who?"



"Who's there?"

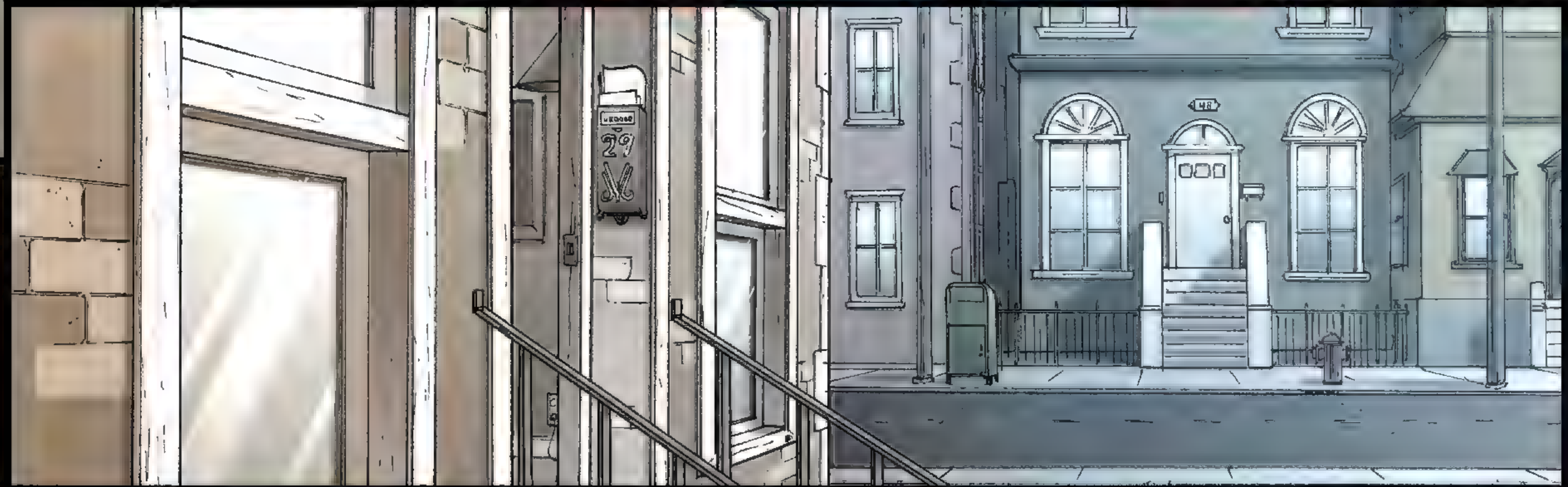
What the...?

Friend of yours, O'Hirn?

The Rhino!

"He won't part with this prize willingly. But once the...*item in question* has been removed and powdered..."

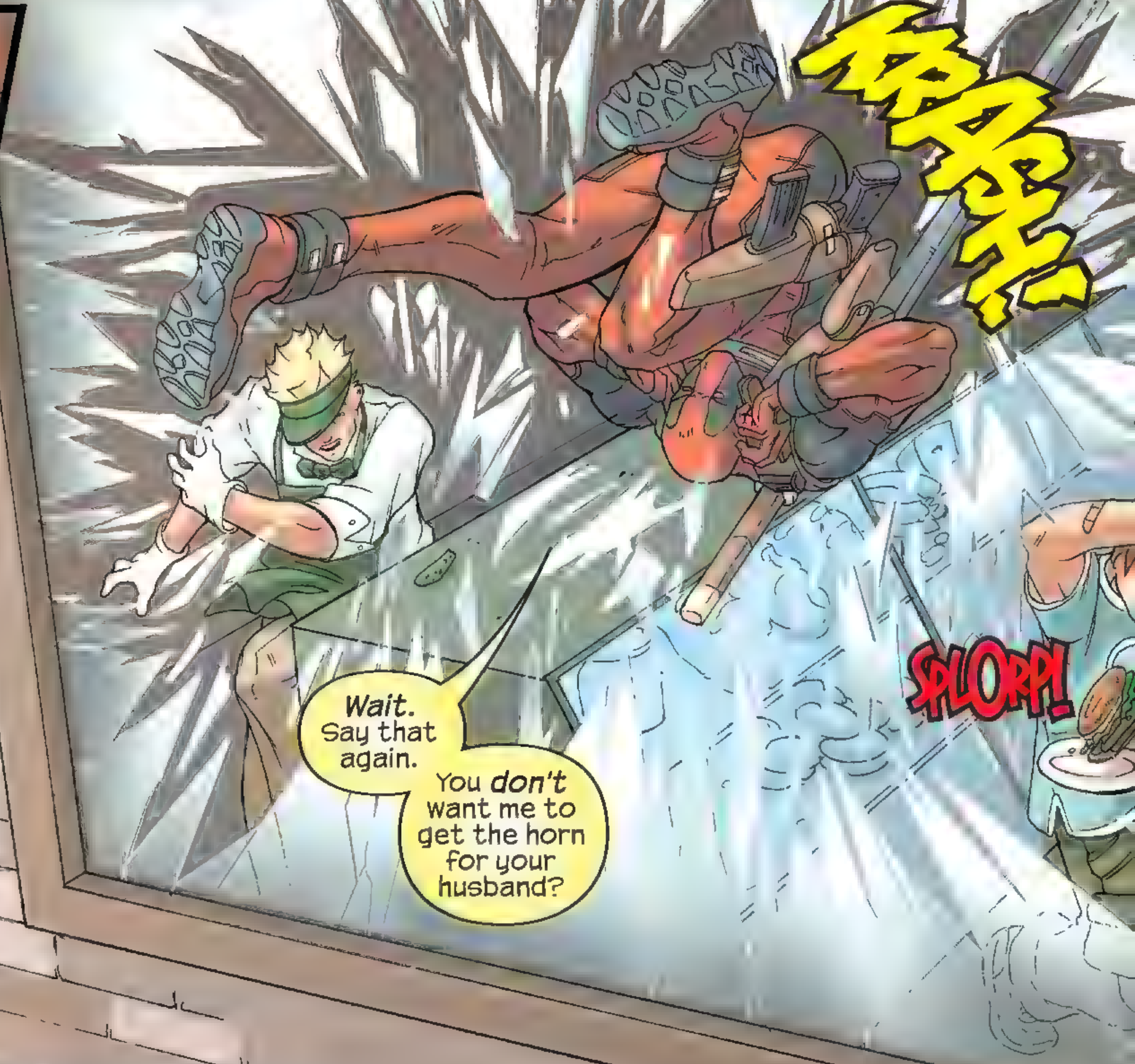
"...legend has it, it will add *immeasurably* to my vitality, Mr. Deadpool. I trust that you'll handle this matter with all due *delicacy*?"





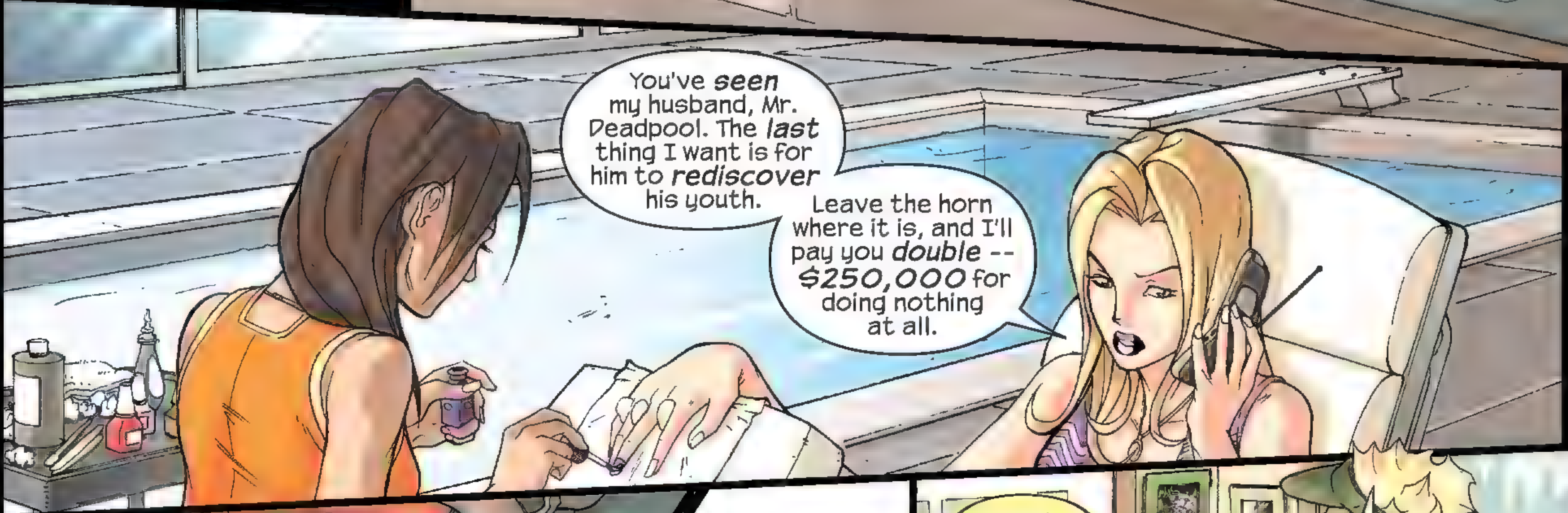
Mmmmm, yello?

Why, Mrs. Whittaker! No, of *course* you didn't call at a bad time.



Wait. Say that again.

You *don't* want me to get the horn for your husband?



You've *seen* my husband, Mr. Deadpool. The *last* thing I want is for him to *rediscover* his youth.

Leave the horn where it is, and I'll pay you *double* -- \$250,000 for doing nothing at all.



Dammit, man...I *know* that *painted harlot* is on the other line. Don't *listen* to her. She's trying to foment *rebellion*!

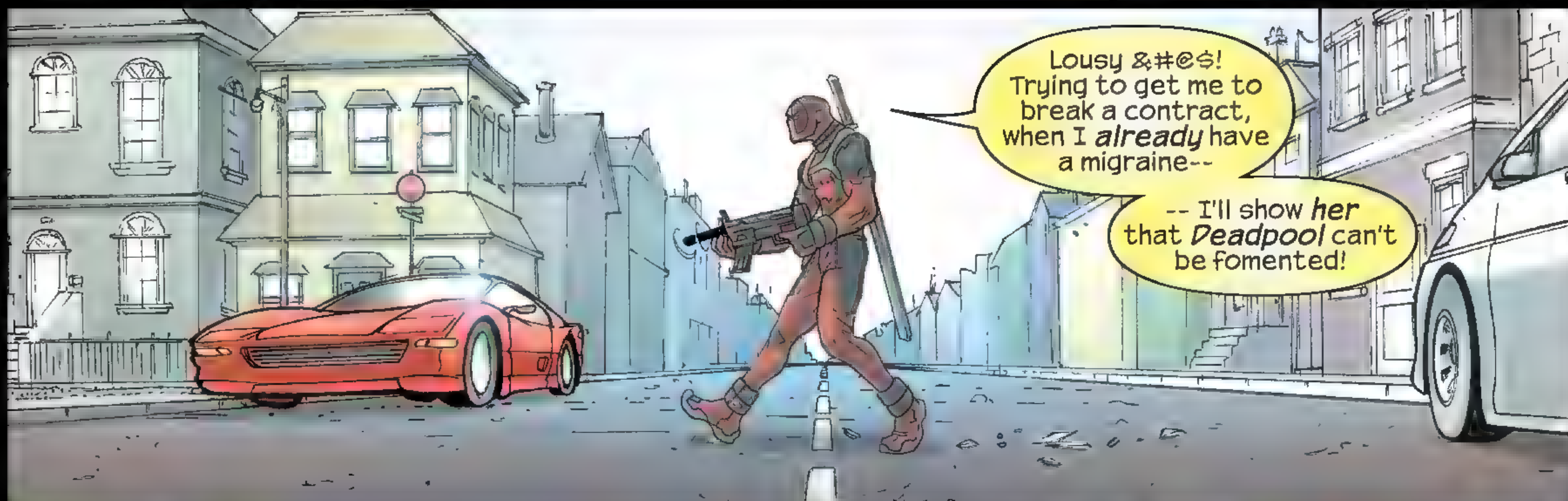


You! What does "*foment*" mean?

~ack~ ...to instigate or ~uhuh~ foster, sir...~gasp!~

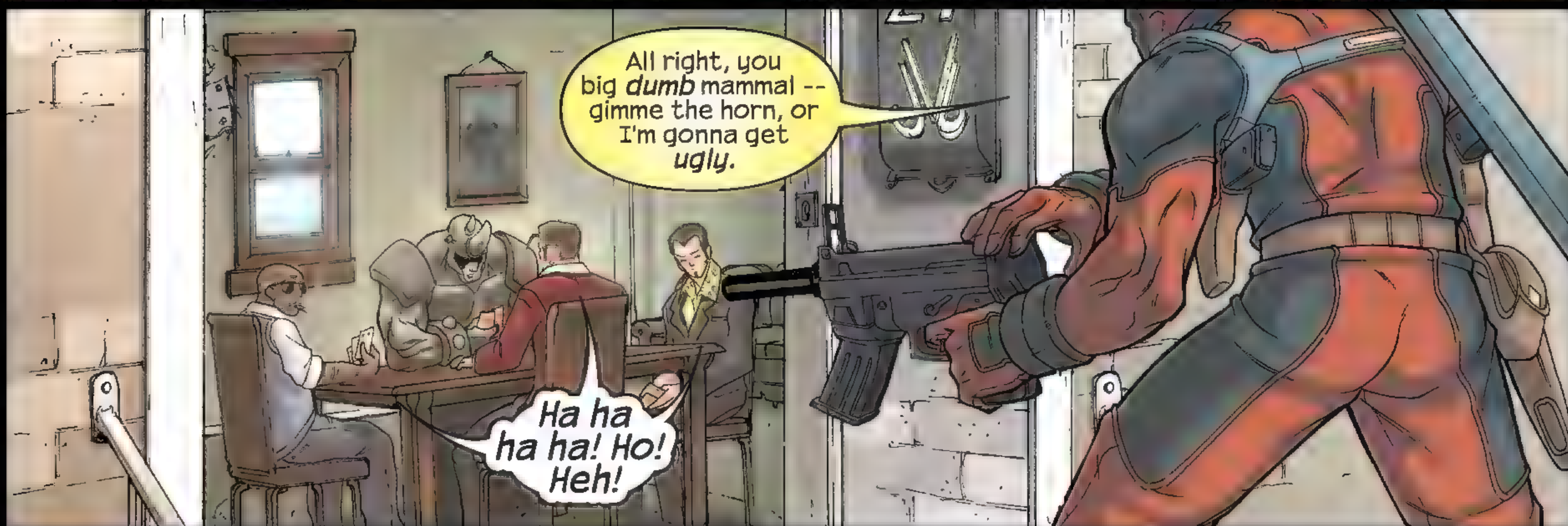
Oh, yeah, like *that* helps me!

Hang on, call waiting.



Lousy ö! Trying to get me to break a contract, when I *already* have a migraine--

-- I'll show *her* that *Deadpool* can't be fomented!



All right, you big *dumb* mammal -- gimme the horn, or I'm gonna get ugly.

Ha ha ha ha! Ho! Heh!



Hey, slick-- really think you can hurt the *Rhino* with that stupid gun?

Hey, I knew I recognized that chump ...

... ain't that the guy what did the *Four Winds* job?

Go away, little *nobody*.



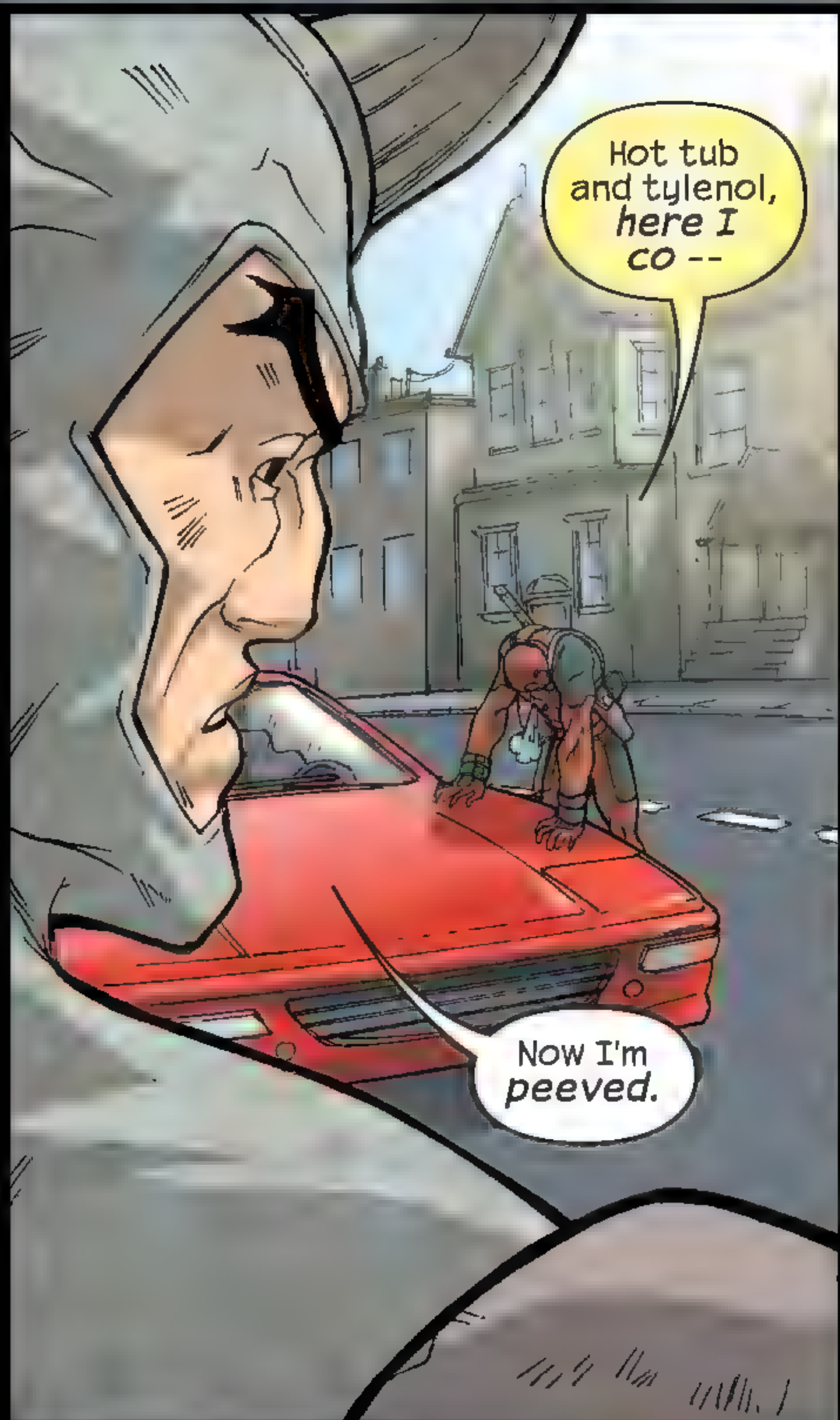
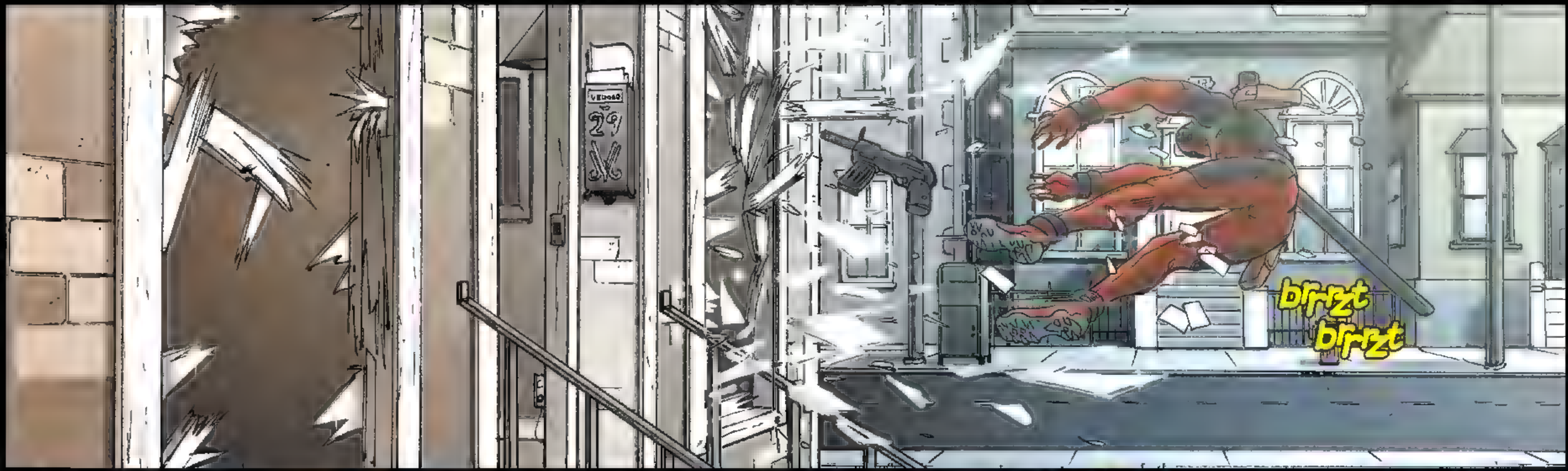
You asked for it, Rhino! It's go time!

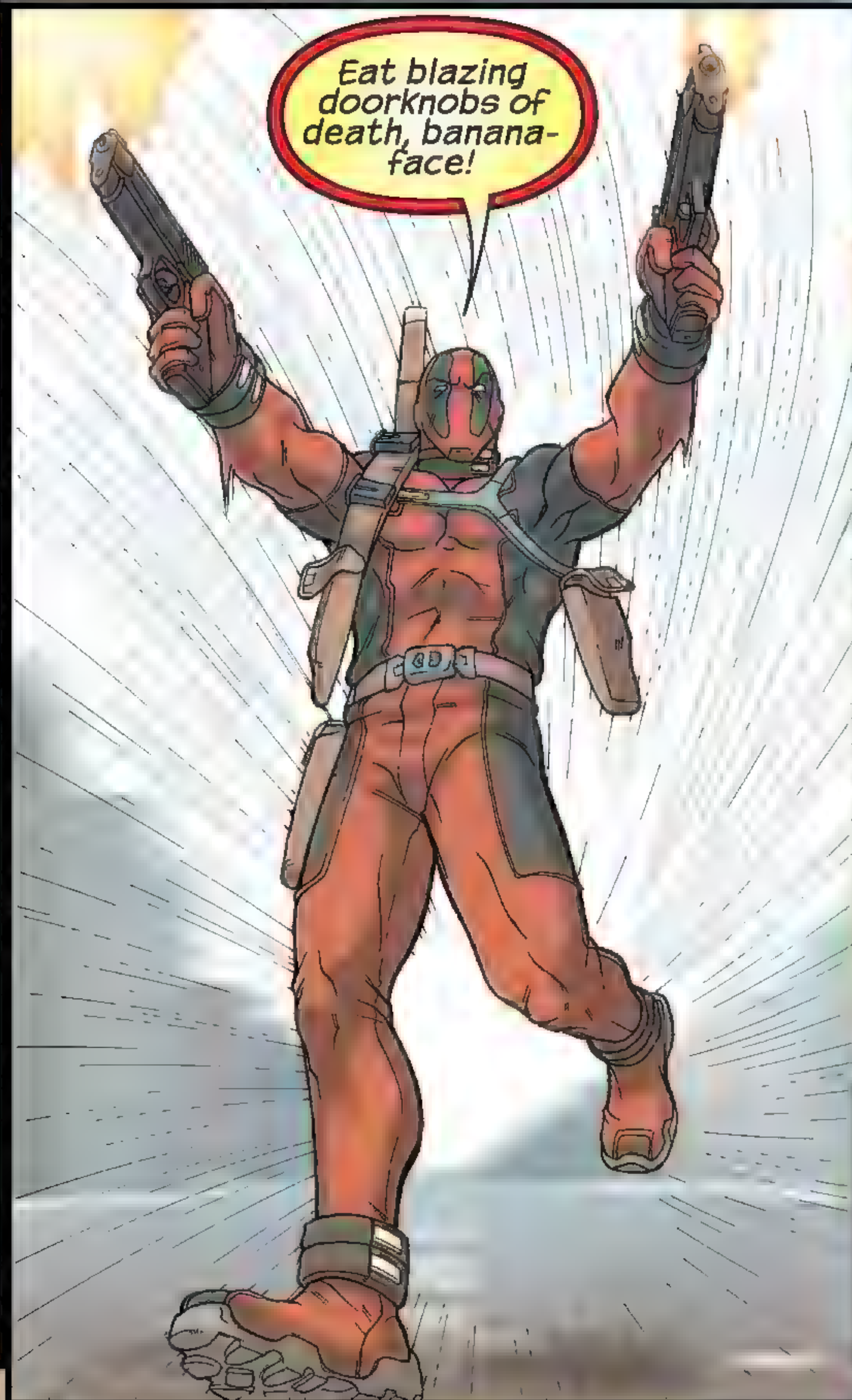
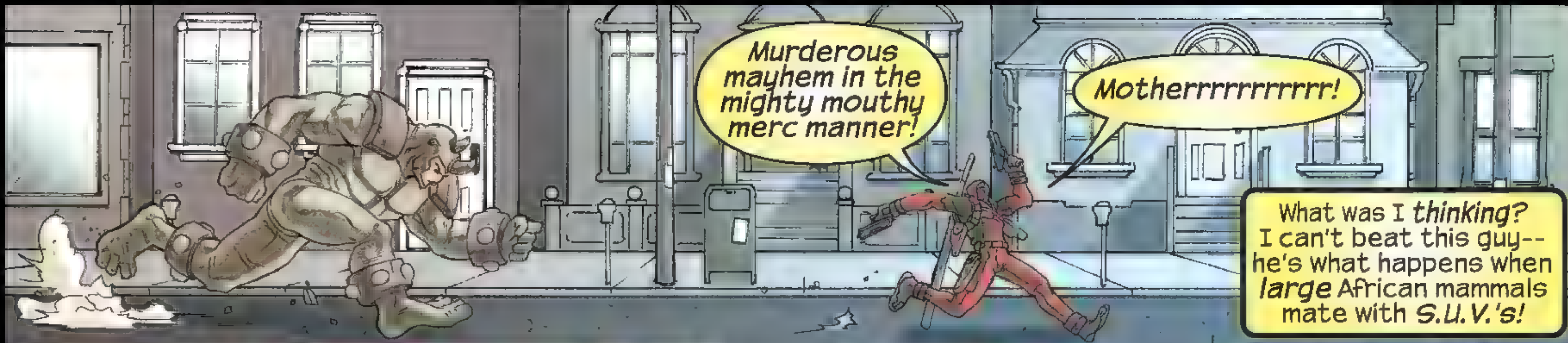
KA-THOK!

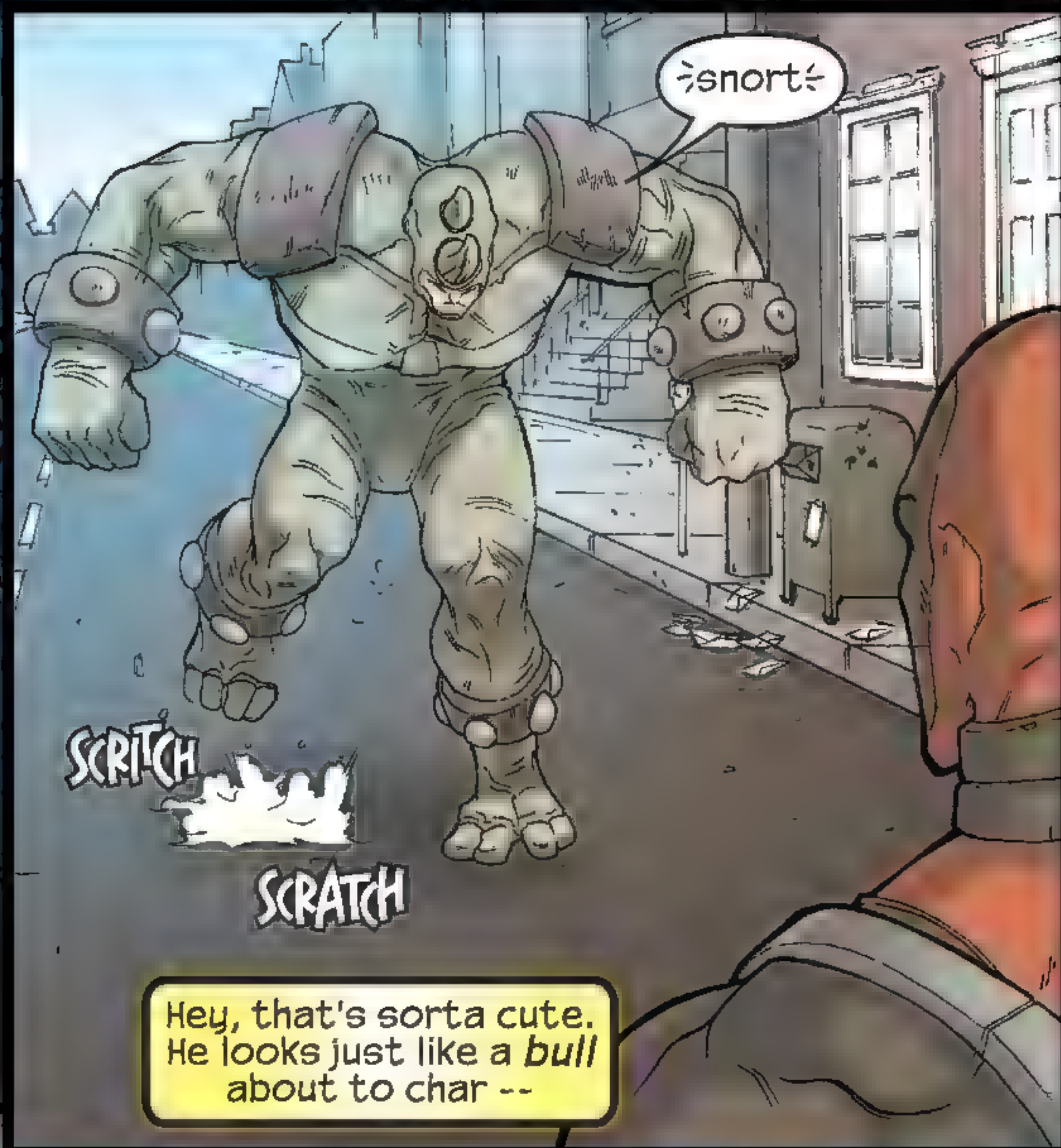


Mister, you'd best let *this* go, before I get *peev*ed.

Huh. Guess my aim's still off. Serves him right for making fun of my *doorknob*!





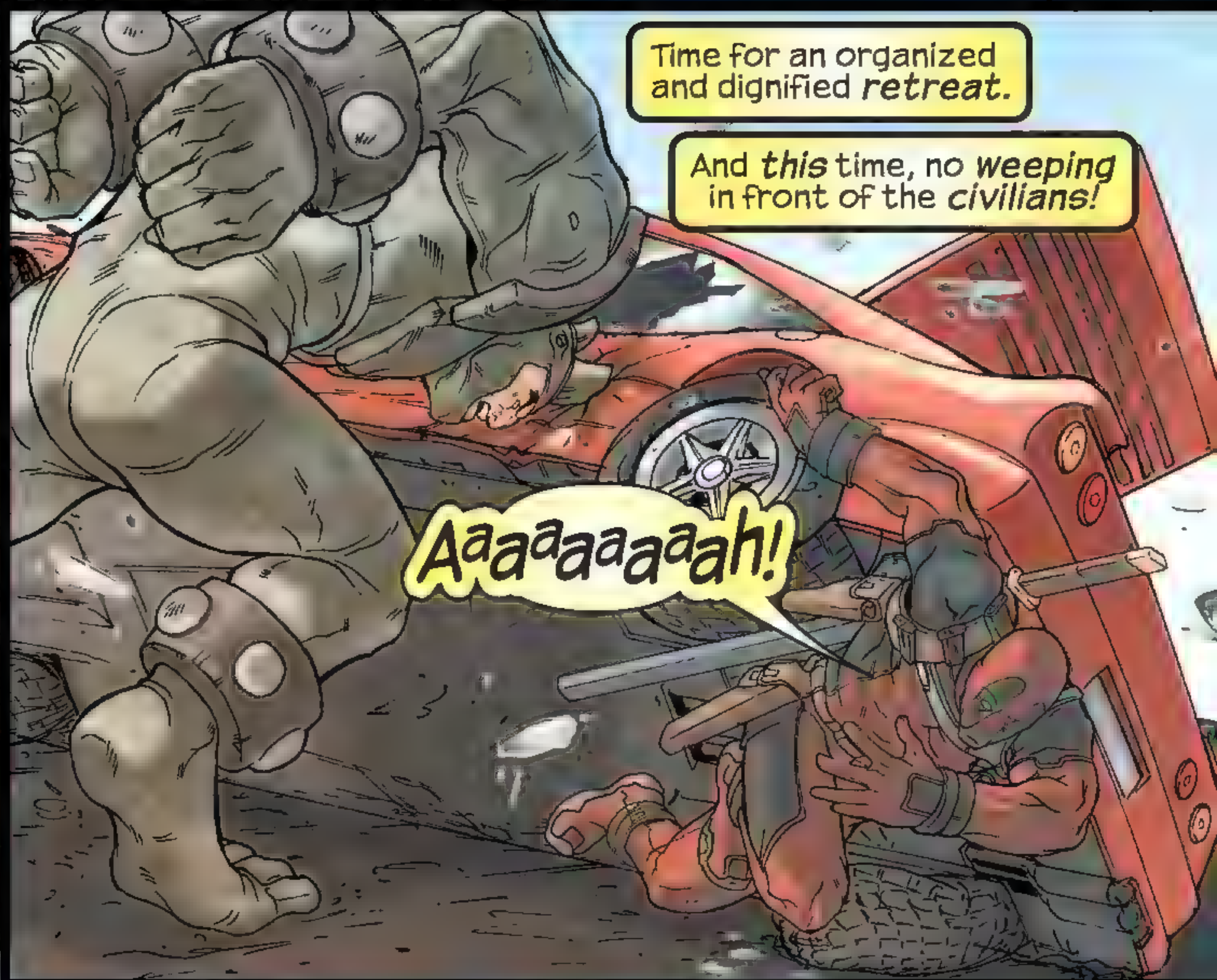


snort

SCRATCH

SCRATCH

Hey, that's sorta cute. He looks just like a *bull* about to char --



Time for an organized and dignified *retreat*.

And *this* time, no weeping in front of the *civilians*!

Aaaaaaaah!



Oh wonderful *fate*! My *knight* in leather armor!

Go. Drive, man! Go!!

What? Who the hell are *you*?



Look, unless you're like, *Galactus* under all that leather, you'd better just drive.

I see your *point*. Hang on.

brzt brzt

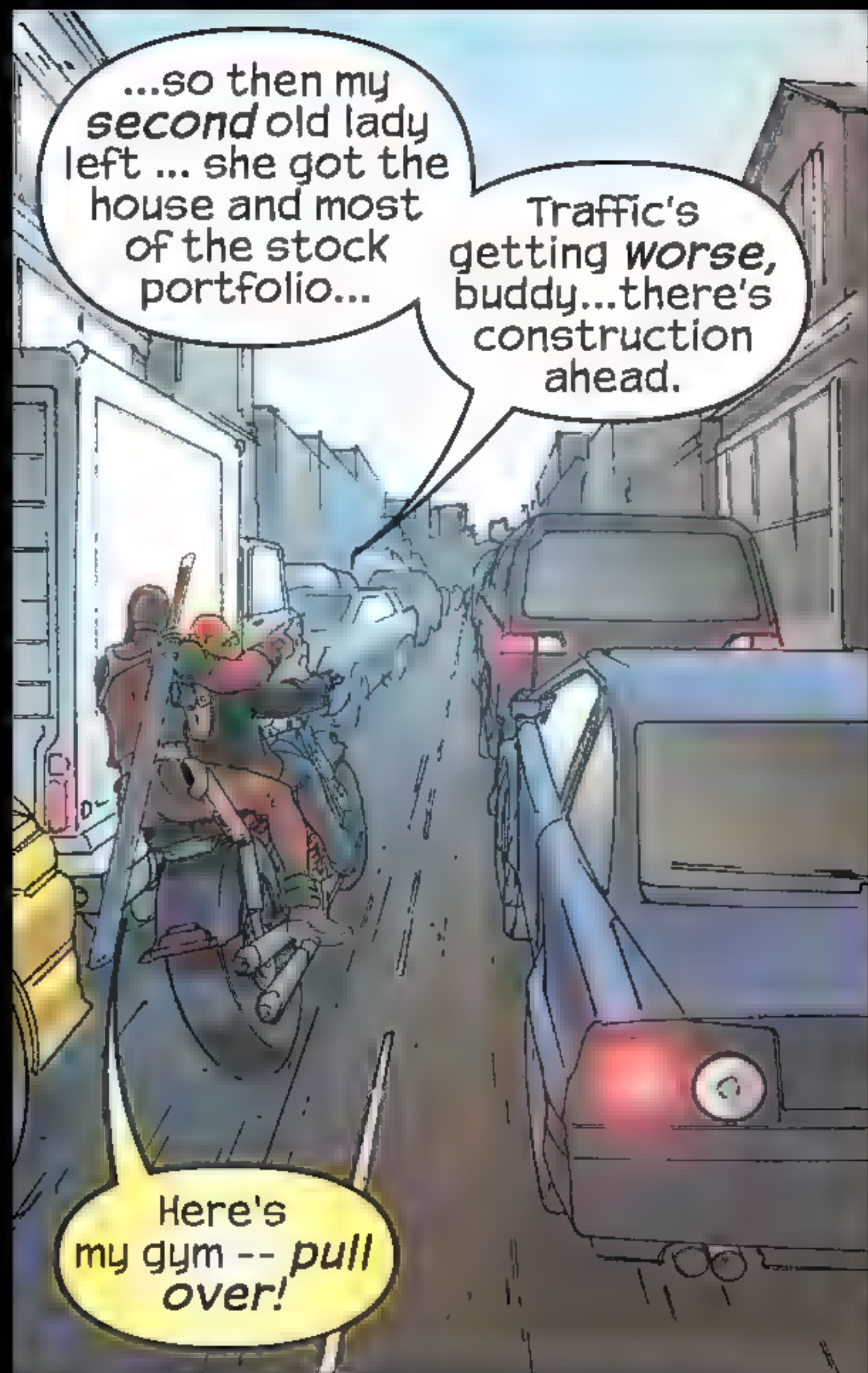


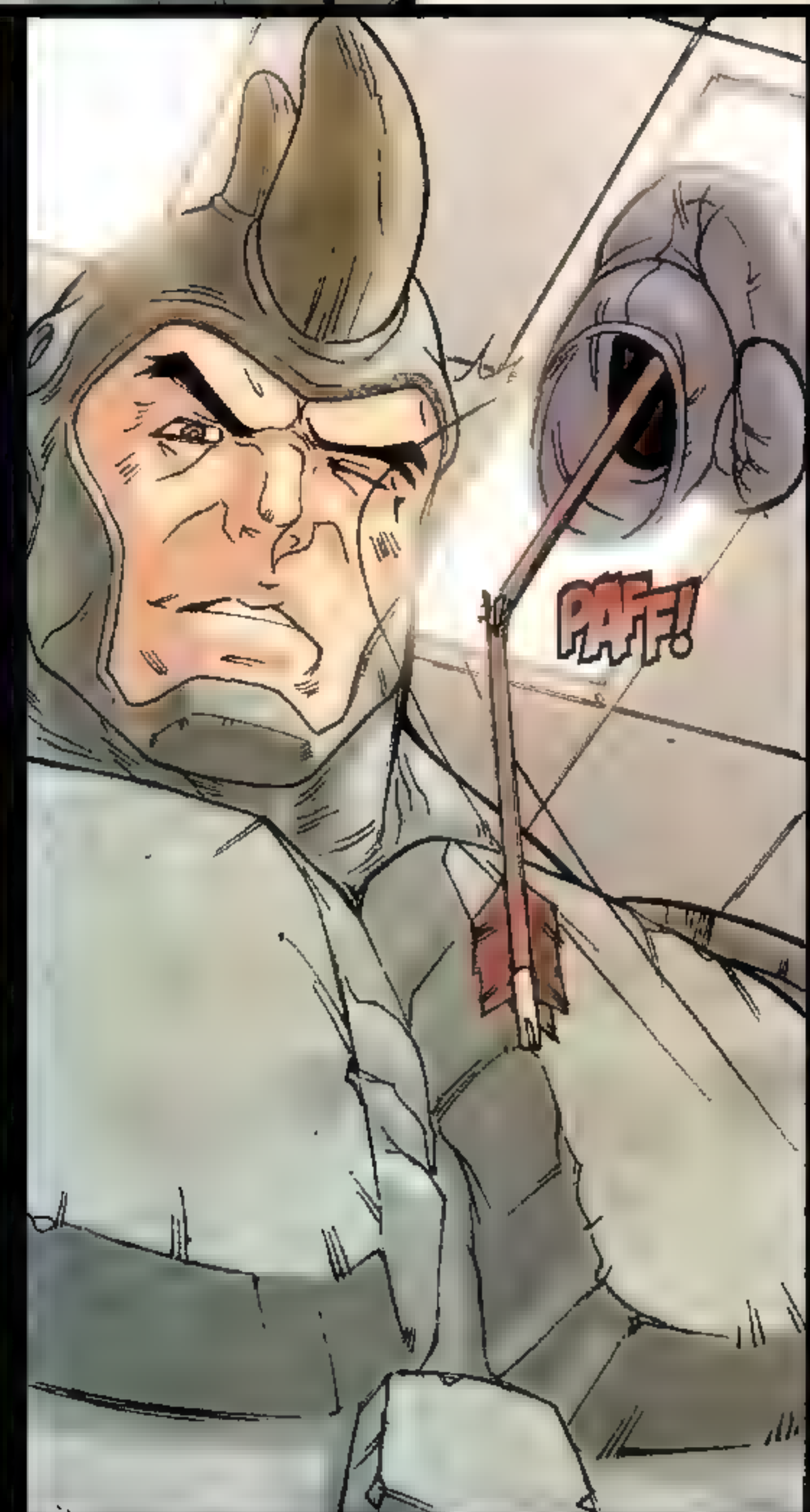
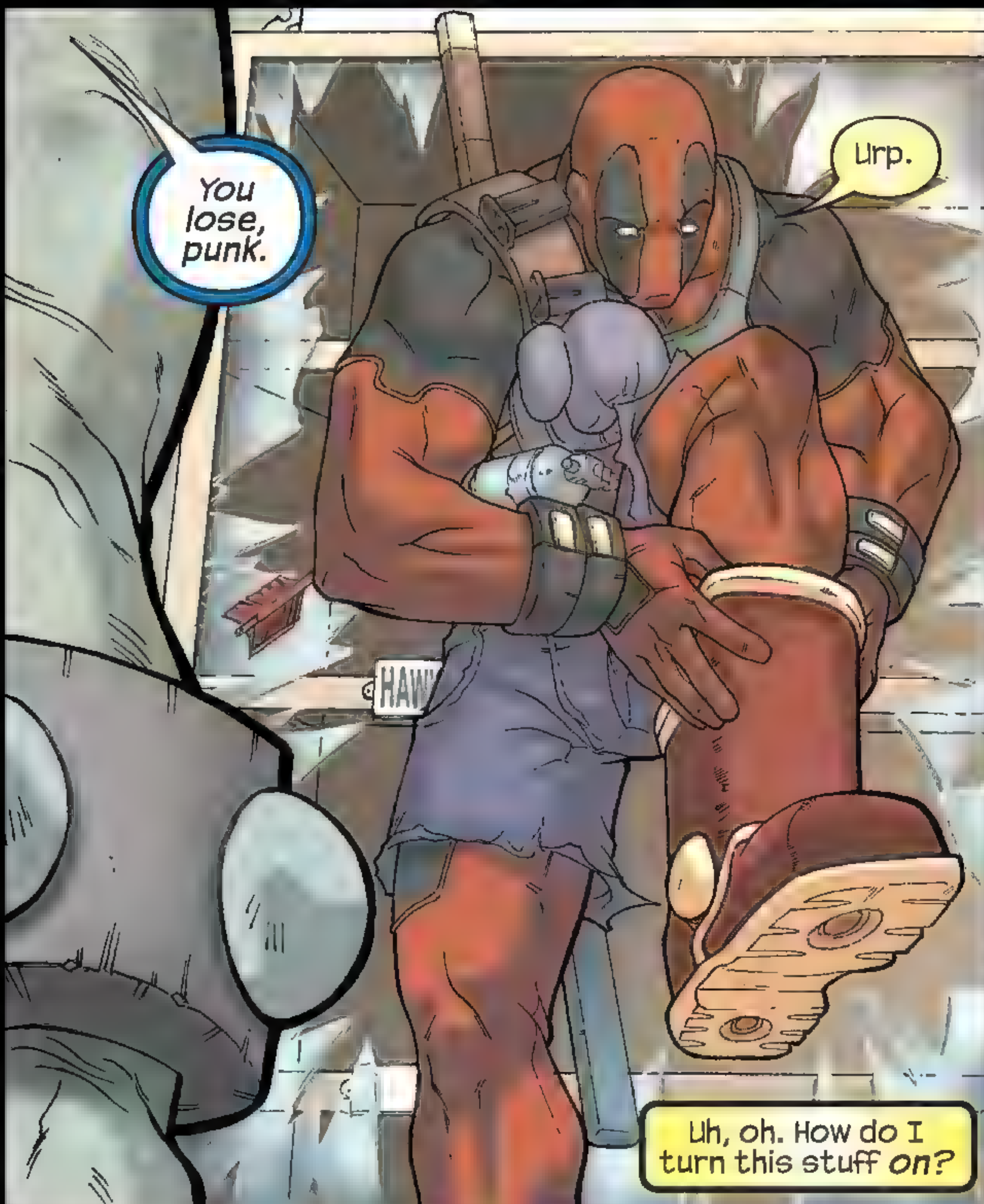
AAARRHH!

No, Mr. Whittaker--I don't even think I can get the *horn*, not even for...

...how much?!

VRRROOOOOWW!



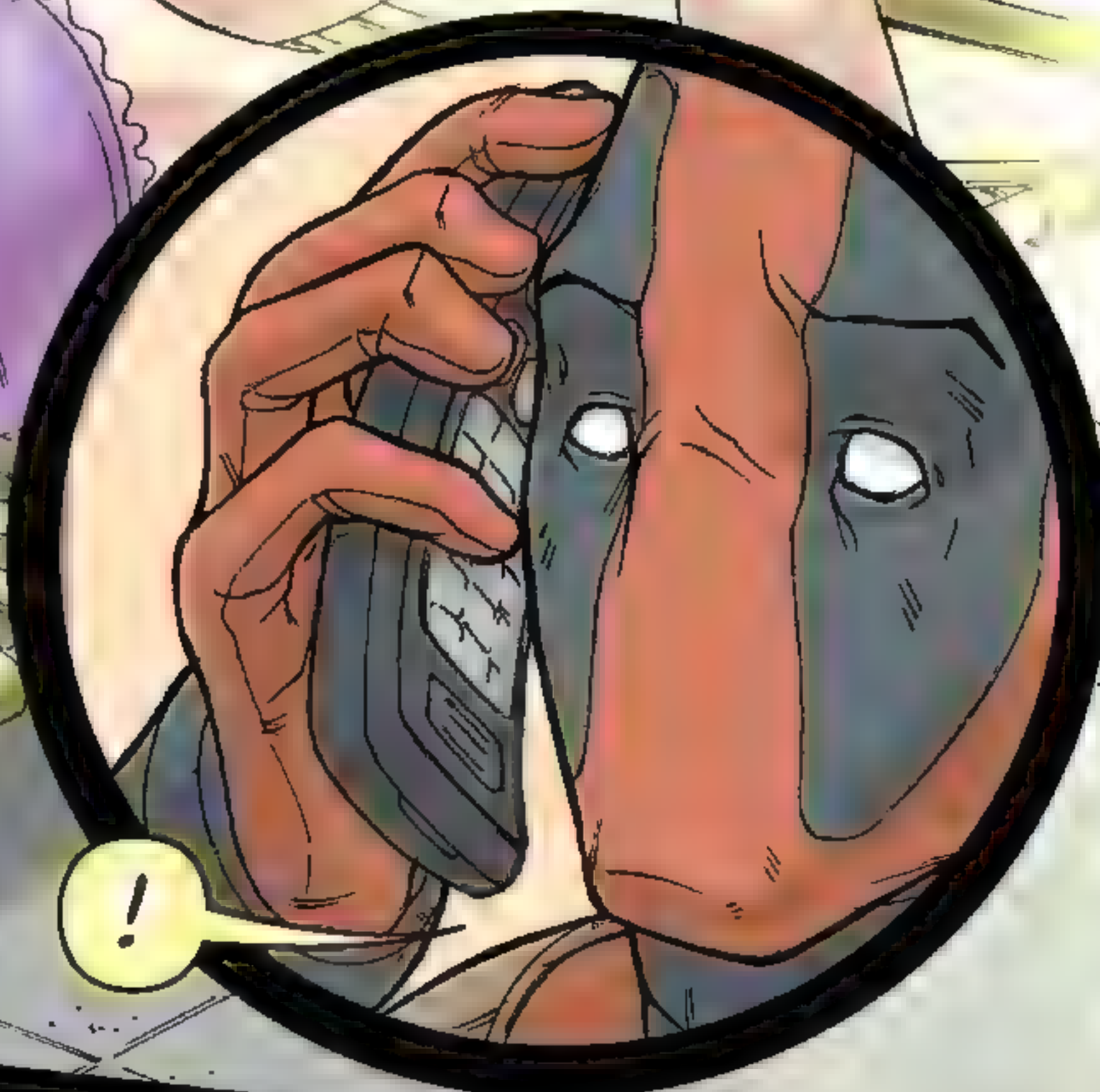




Soon, back at
Mr. Whittaker's
penthouse ...

My husband has
most of the *money*.
The most I can get is
750,000 dollars.
However...

... if you forget
about the *horn*,
here's what *else*
I'll throw in:
~whisper whisper
whisper~



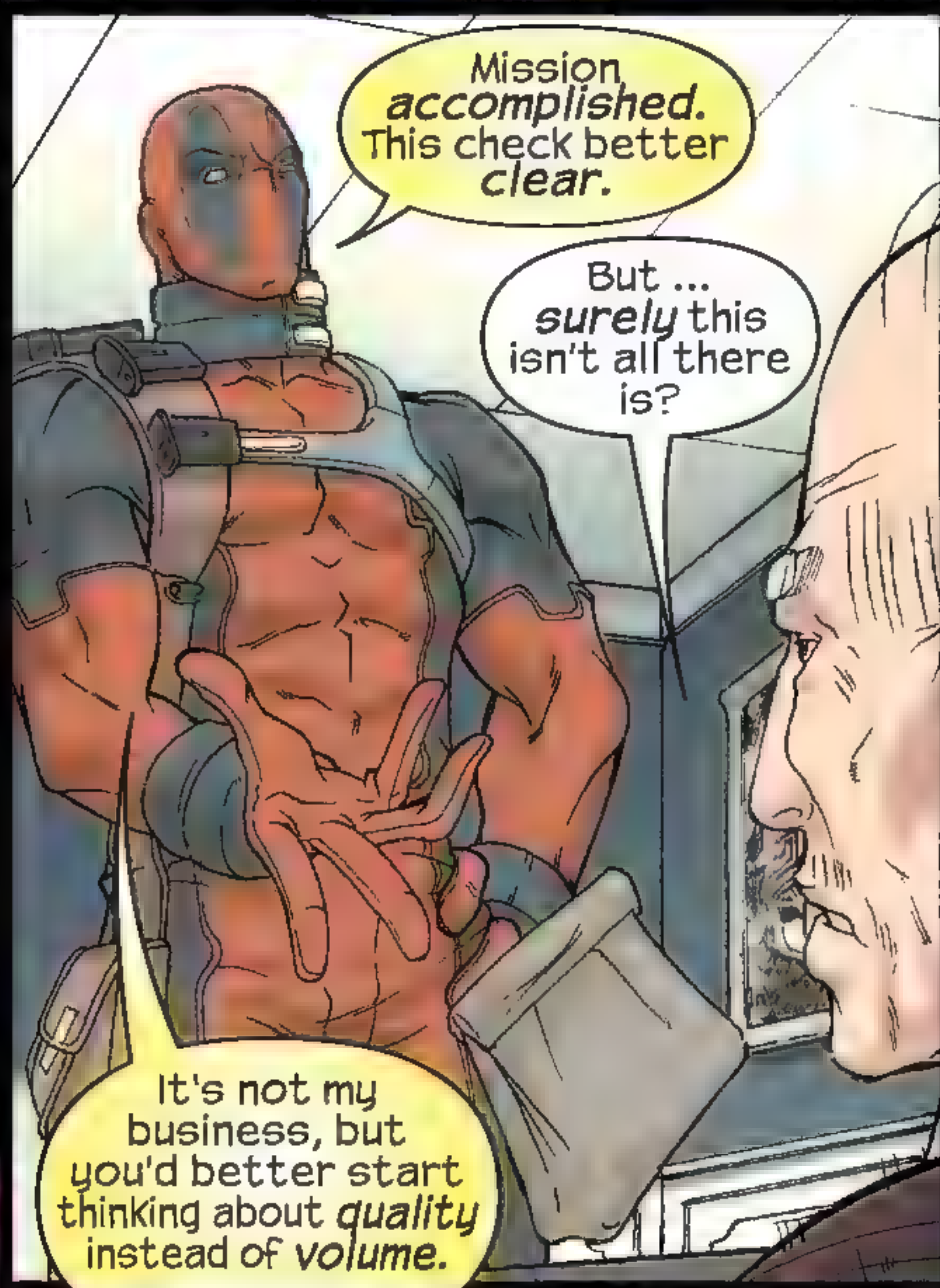
Mr. W., I'm sorry,
but there is *no way*
you can top your
wife's last offer. Nope,
uh uh, *nohow!*

Really, Mr. Deadpool?
How about if I give you a
million dollars, and I
don't have you dipped in
bronze and added to my
statue collection?

Sorry, li'l Rhino,
but some *whack-job*
with a buttload of money
wants that little fake
horn of yours.

You may
feel a slight
sawing
sensation.

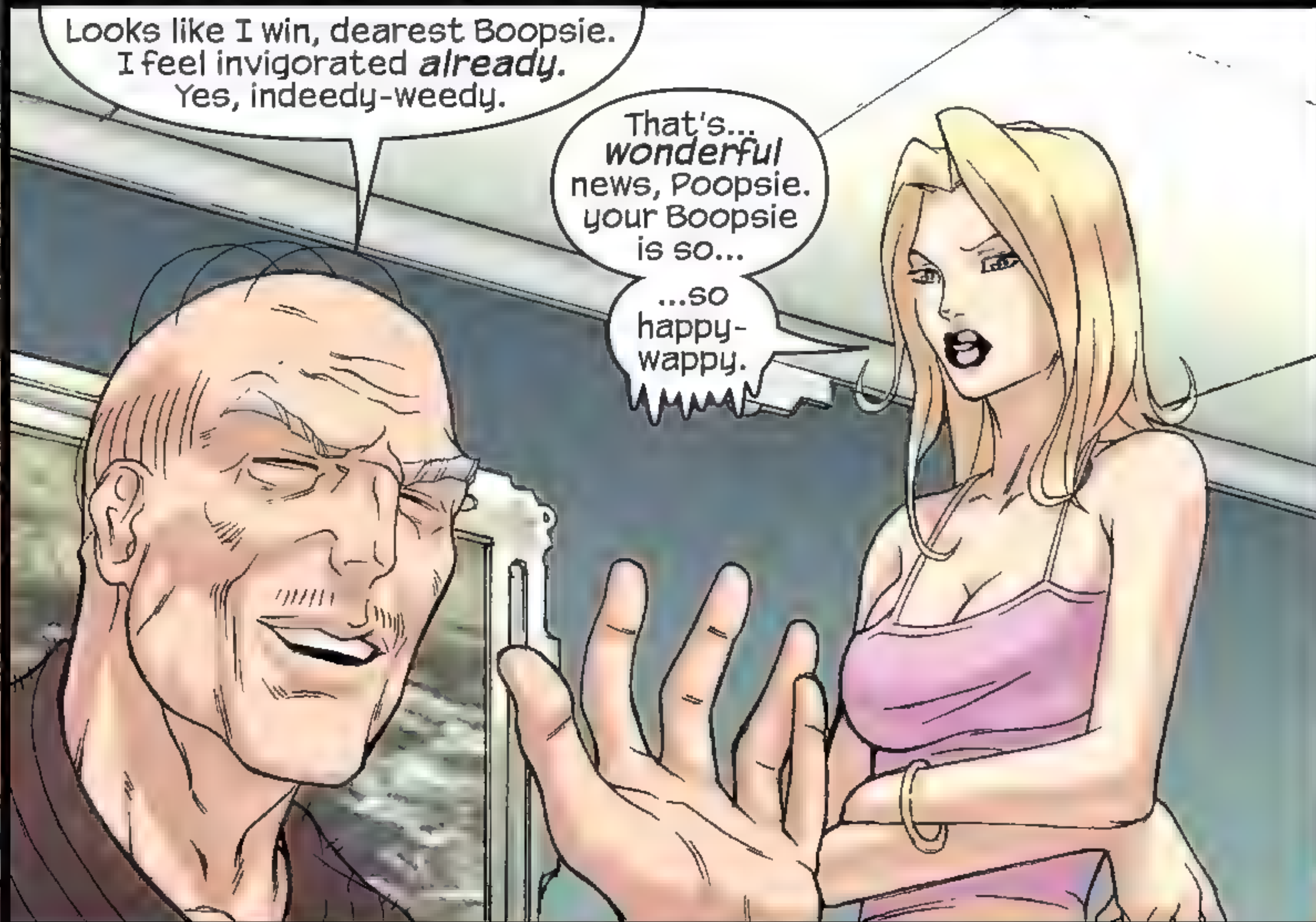
Noooooooo!



Mission accomplished. This check better clear.

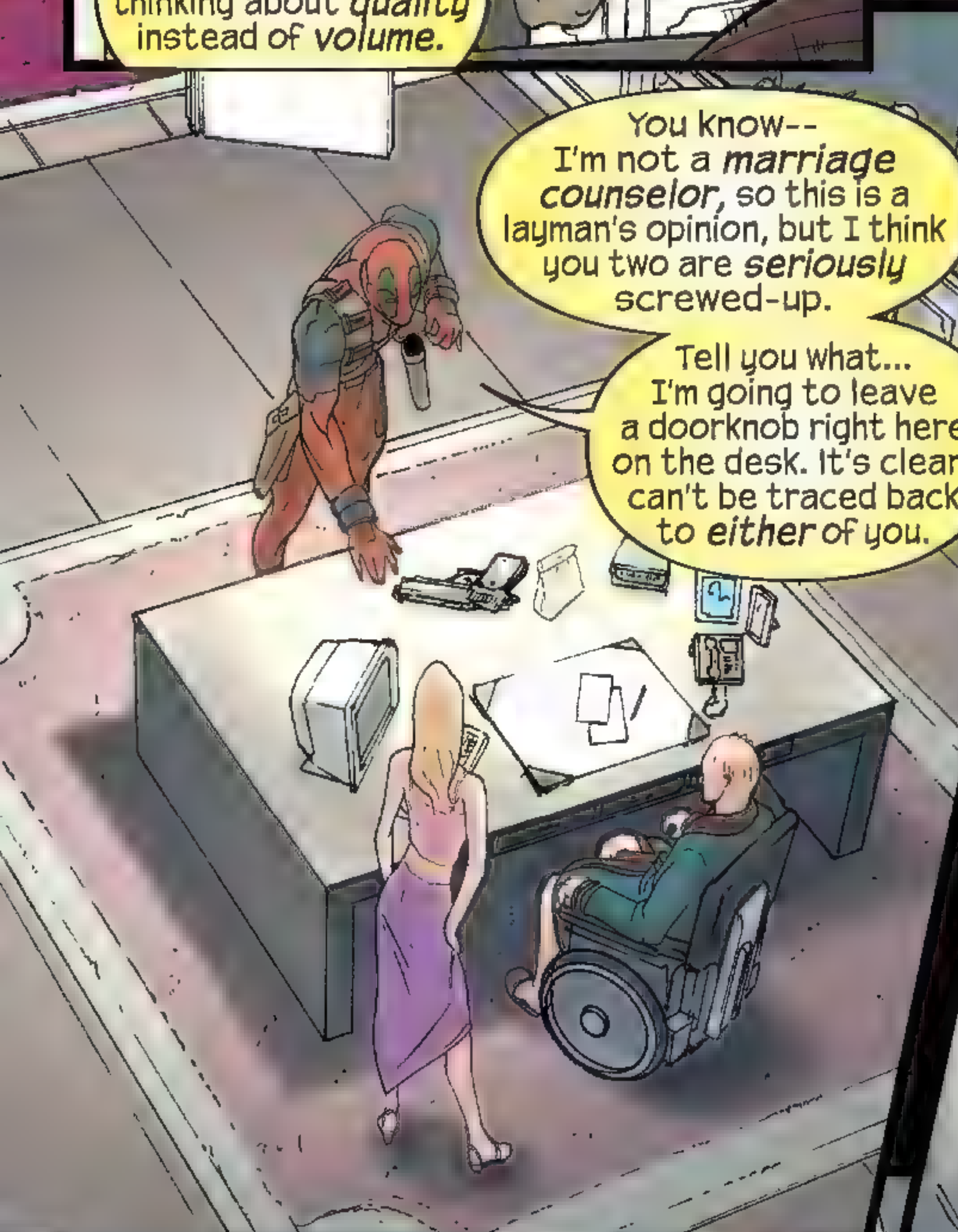
But ... *surely* this isn't all there is?

It's not my business, but you'd better start thinking about *quality* instead of *volume*.



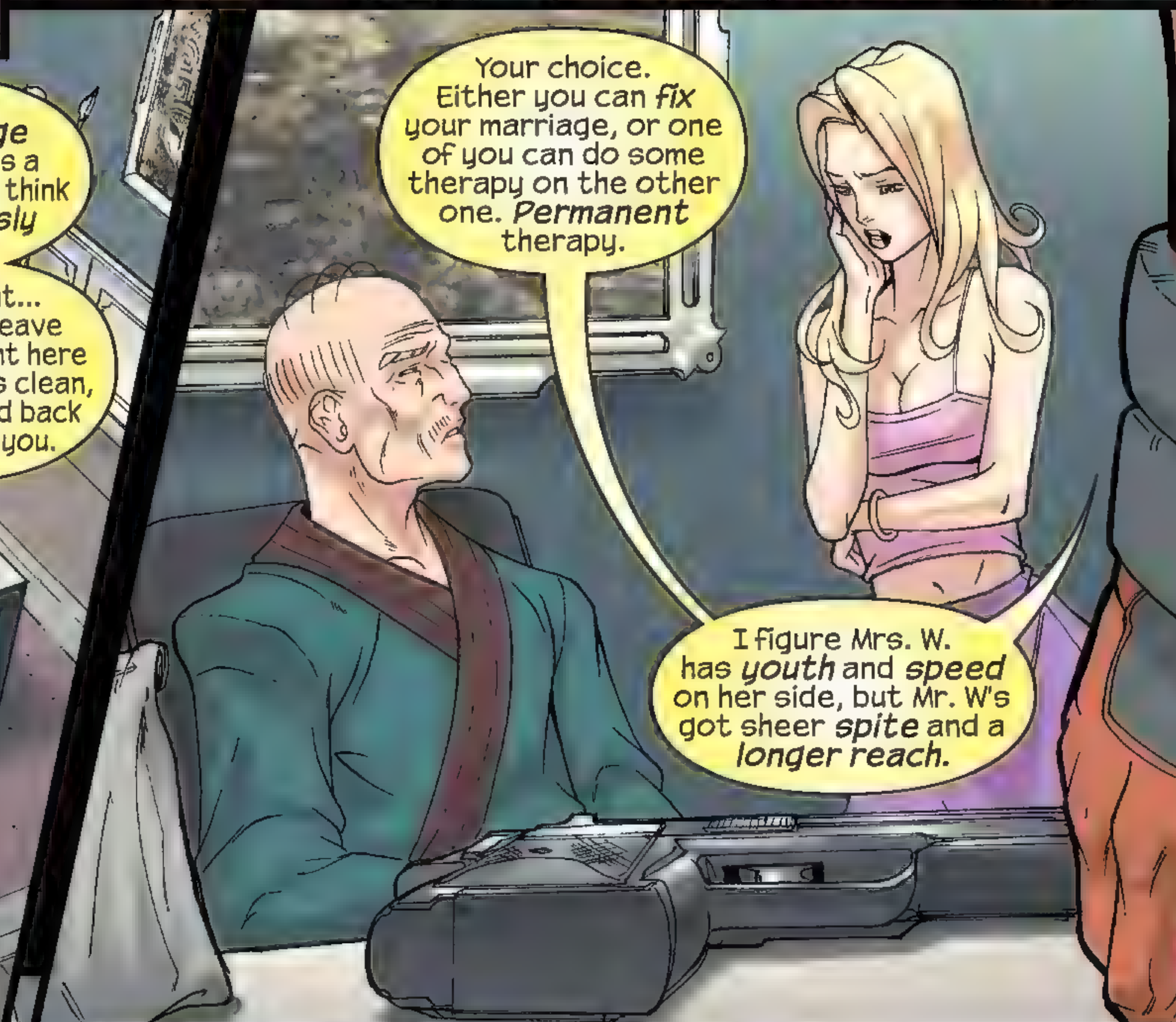
Looks like I win, dearest Boopsie. I feel invigorated *already*. Yes, indeedy-weedy.

That's... wonderful news, Poopsie. your Boopsie is so...
...so happy-wappy.



You know-- I'm not a *marriage counselor*, so this is a layman's opinion, but I think you two are *seriously* screwed-up.

Tell you what... I'm going to leave a doorknob right here on the desk. It's clean, can't be traced back to *either* of you.



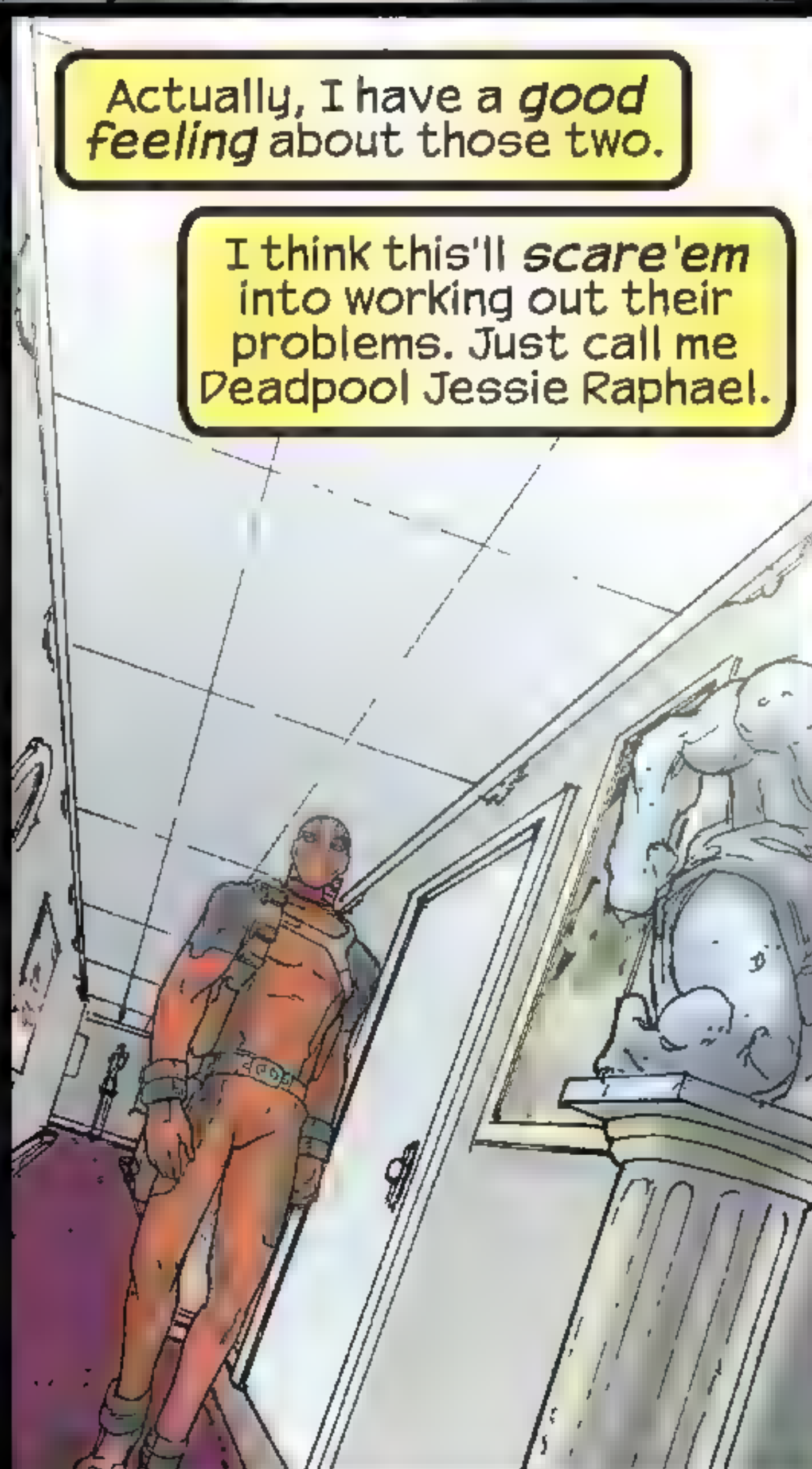
Your choice. Either you can *fix* your marriage, or one of you can do some therapy on the other one. *Permanent* therapy.

I figure Mrs. W. has *youth* and *speed* on her side, but Mr. W's got sheer *spite* and a *longer reach*.



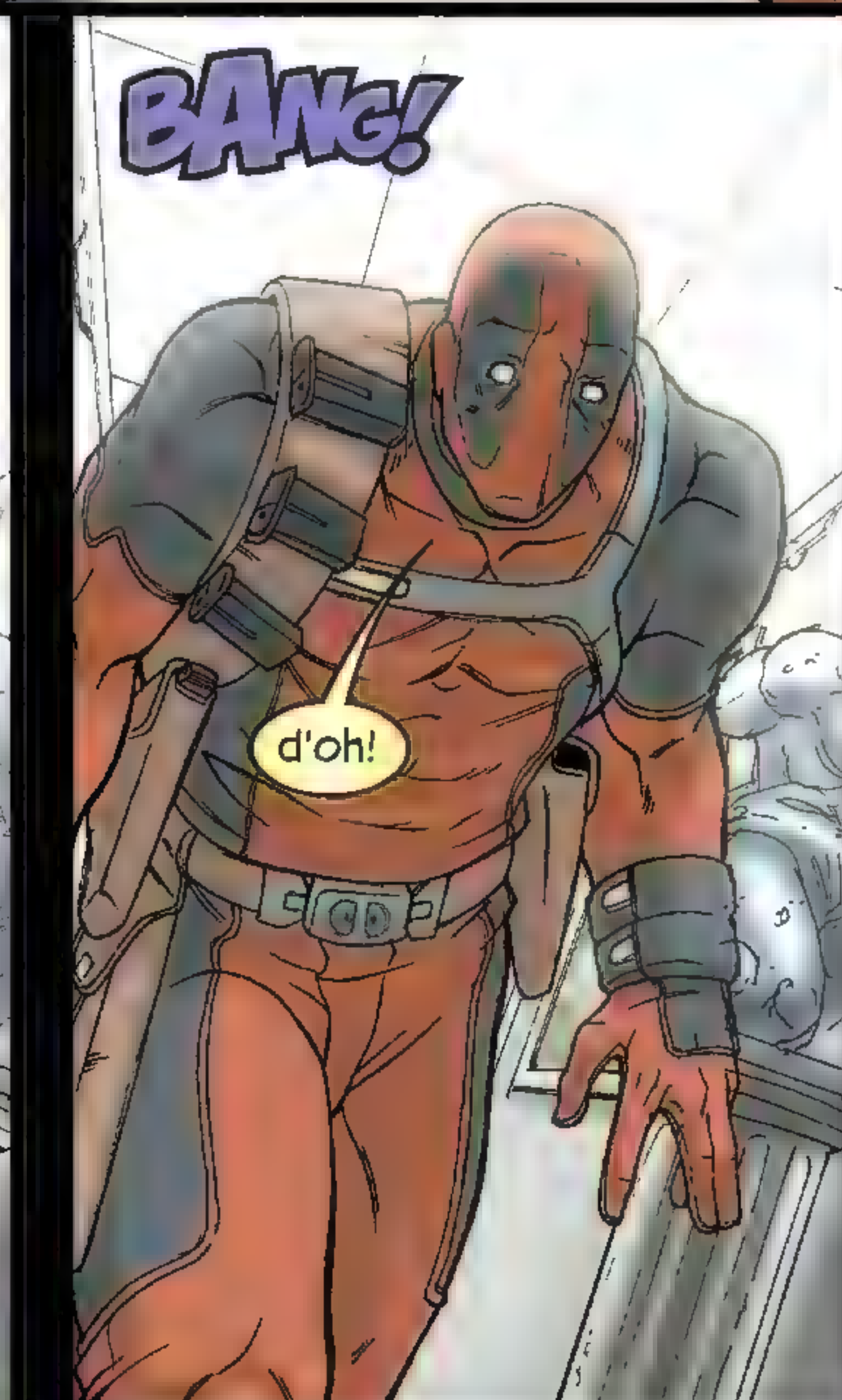
Choose wisely.

It's nice when you can *help* people.



Actually, I have a *good feeling* about those two.

I think this'll *scare* 'em into working out their problems. Just call me Deadpool Jessie Raphael.



BANG!

d'oh!



But what fun would *that* be?

NEXT ISSUE:
THE MOST UNLIKELY TEAM-UP OF ALL!

MARVEL[®] COMICS[®]
DEADPOOL[®]

MARVEL

67

**SIMONE
UDON**

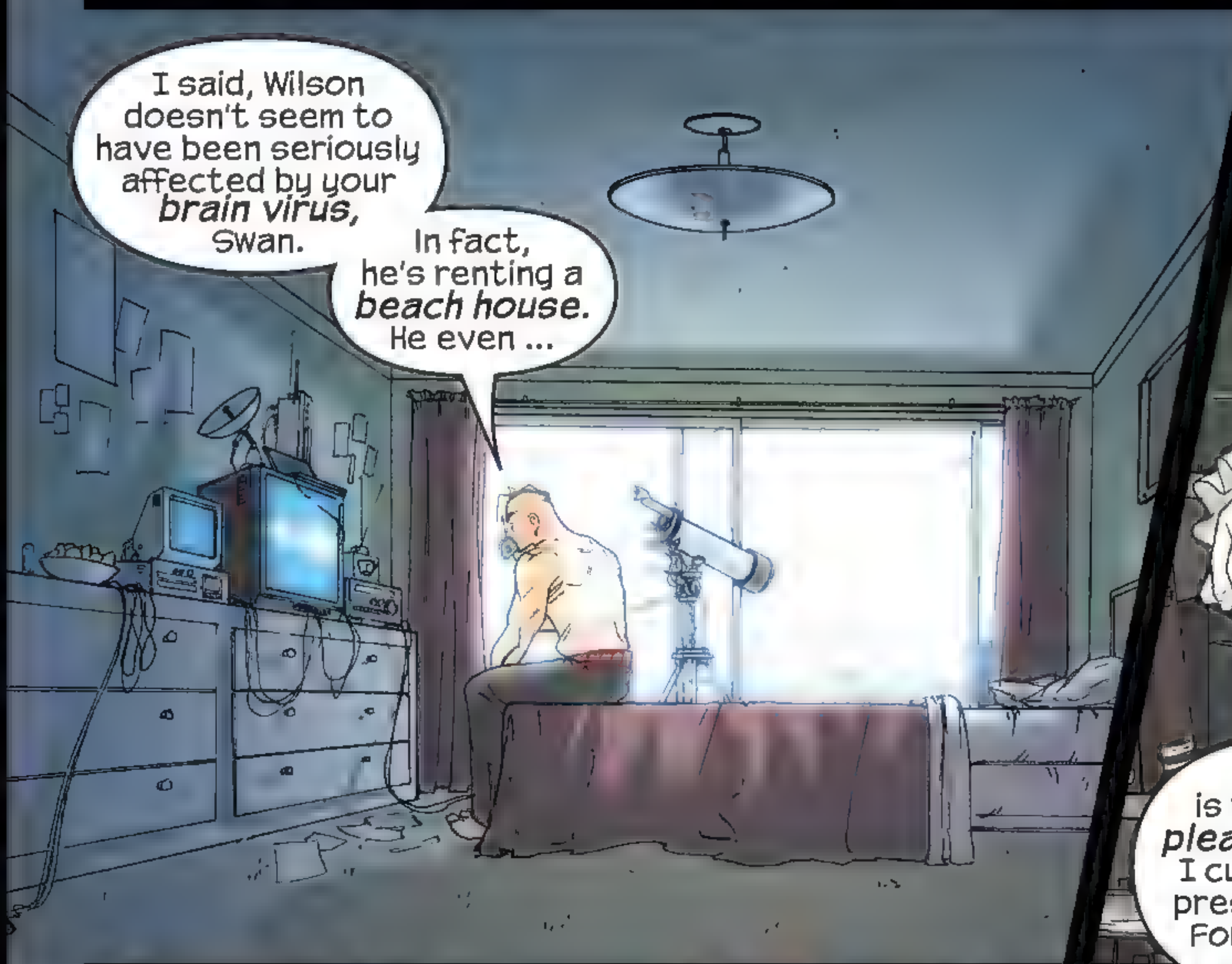




<Please, please, Swan. Do not do *this*. Please, I beg of you. I will do anything. Please.>*

I don't understand, Nijo. Say that last part again.

* Translated from German.



I said, Wilson doesn't seem to have been seriously affected by your *brain virus*, Swan.

In fact, he's renting a *beach house*. He even ...



What? He defeated the Rhino? The *Rhino*?

That's *impossible*. With what I did to his brain he should be a *gibbering idiot* by now.

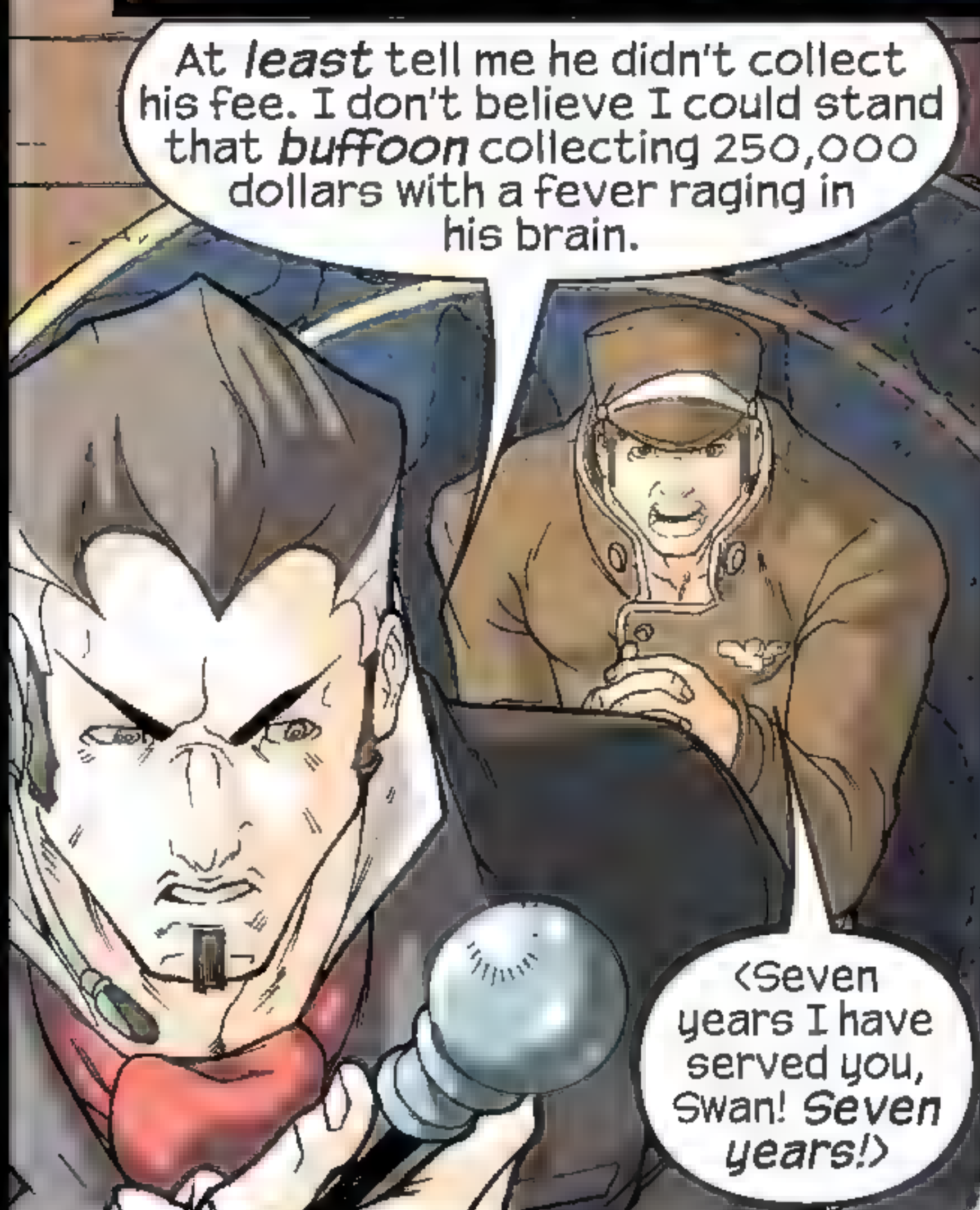
<My wife is with child ... please. I'm sorry I cursed in your presence, Swan. Forgive me ...>



But there *are* signs of mental deterioration, at least.

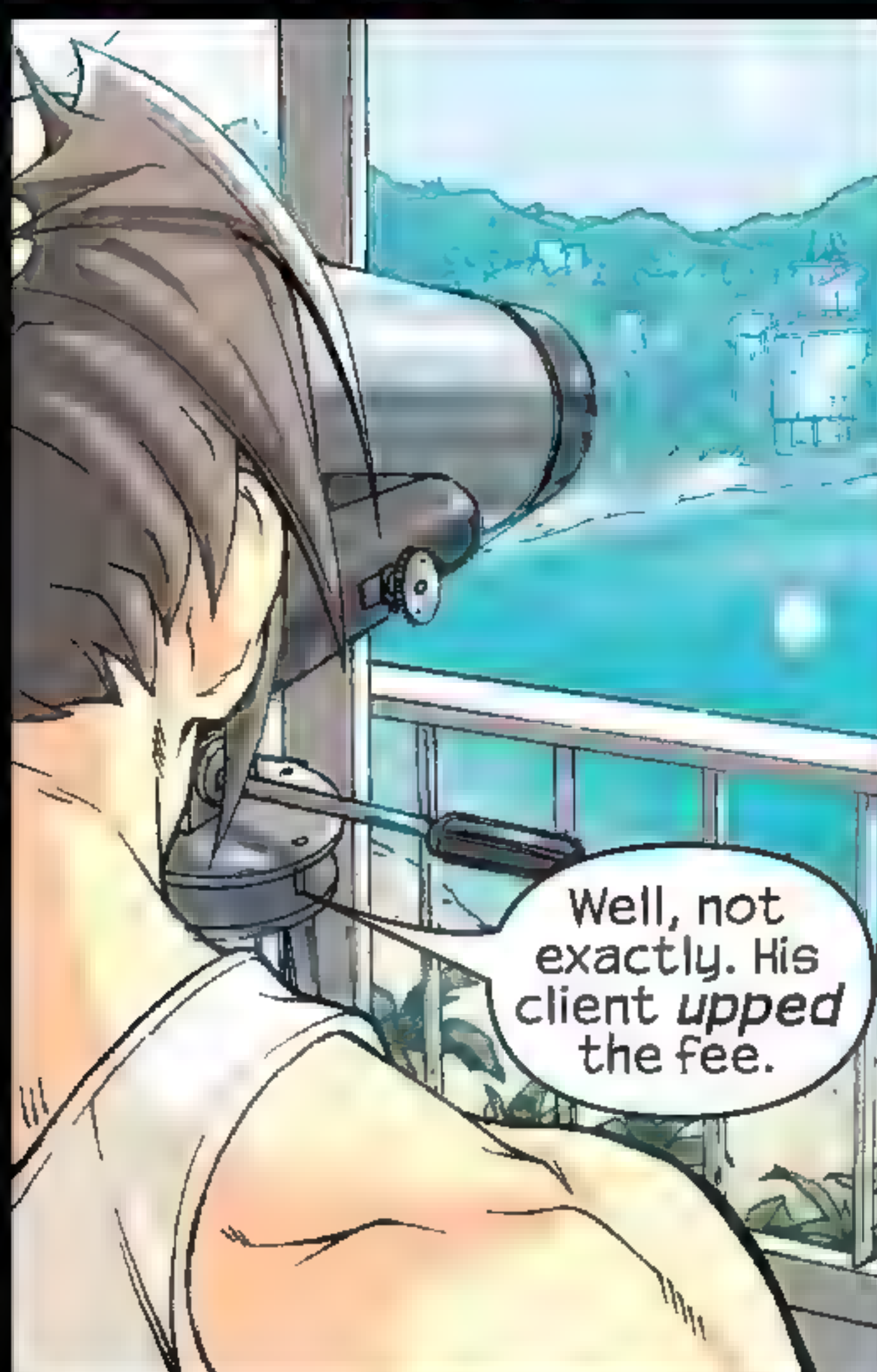
He confuses *words*, and is unable to aim his *guns*.

There may be more symptoms as the *virus* grows...



At *least* tell me he didn't collect his fee. I don't believe I could stand that *buffoon* collecting 250,000 dollars with a fever raging in his brain.

<Seven years I have served you, Swan! *Seven years!*>



Well, not exactly. His client *upped* the fee.



They *what*? How much?

How much?

uhhhhh... drillllrrrr... uhhhhhhh...

ONE
MILLION
DOLLARS!

All right, so things
have been a little
weird.

I don't mean 'Mama's
Family' weird, I'm talking
'The Prisoner' weird.

There are *two days* I
don't remember at all.
I forget *words* for
things. My aim is *shot*.
And I haven't told any-
one, but I've been
having *headaches*.

Maybe I'm just going
through *puberty*.

Again.

Wait. That
doesn't sound
right.

What I *mean* is, it's
probably no big deal.
But who cares, anyway?
I just cashed a check
with *six zeroes* -- I
could order a pizza
with a *supermodel*
on top, if I wanted!

BUDDY PICTURE

Story by
Gail Simone

Art by Alvin Lee, Rob Ross, Eric Vedder,
A-Zero, Ken Siu-Chong, TR2 & The RealT of UDON

UDON Chief
Erik Ko

Letters by
Dave Sharpe

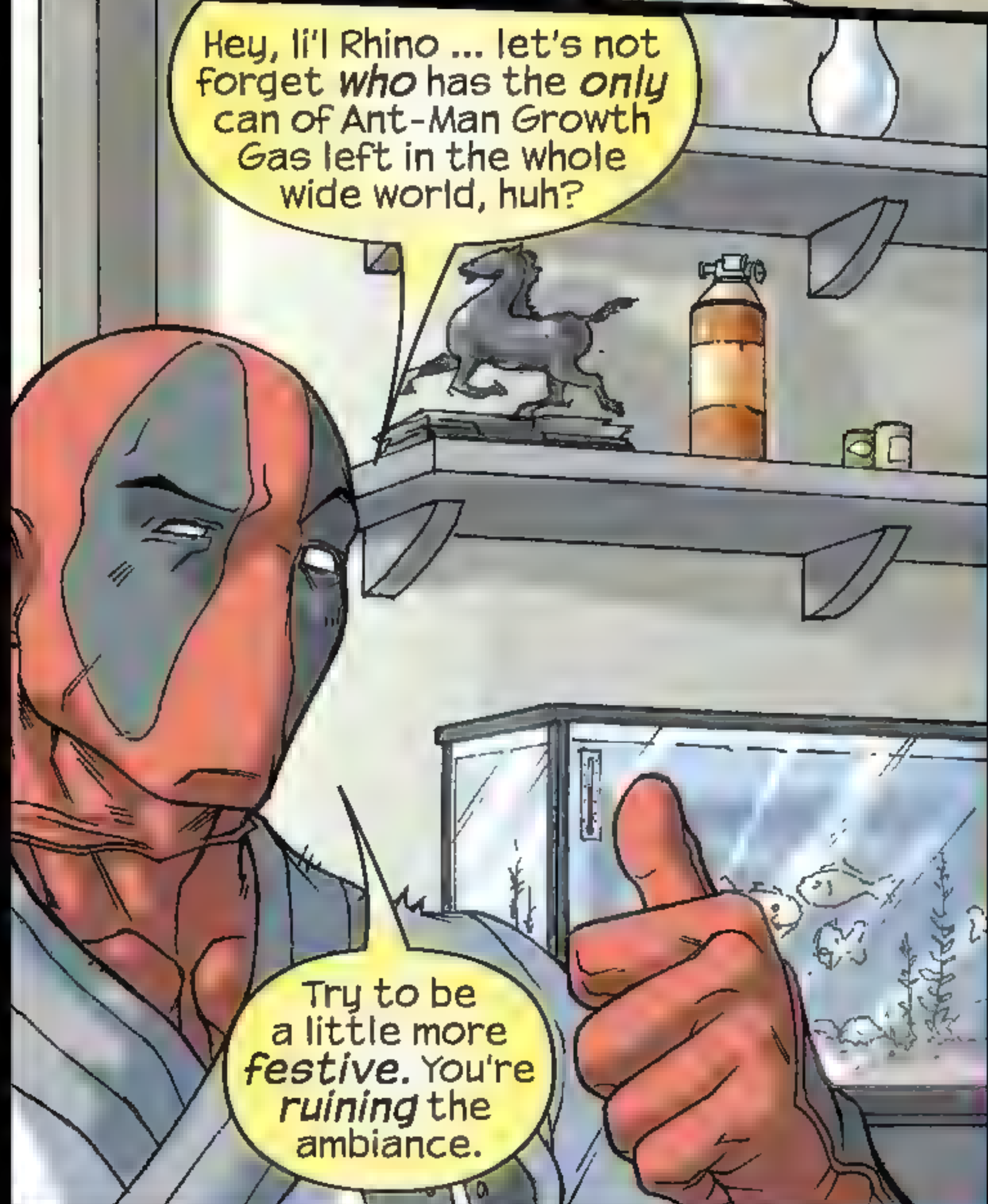
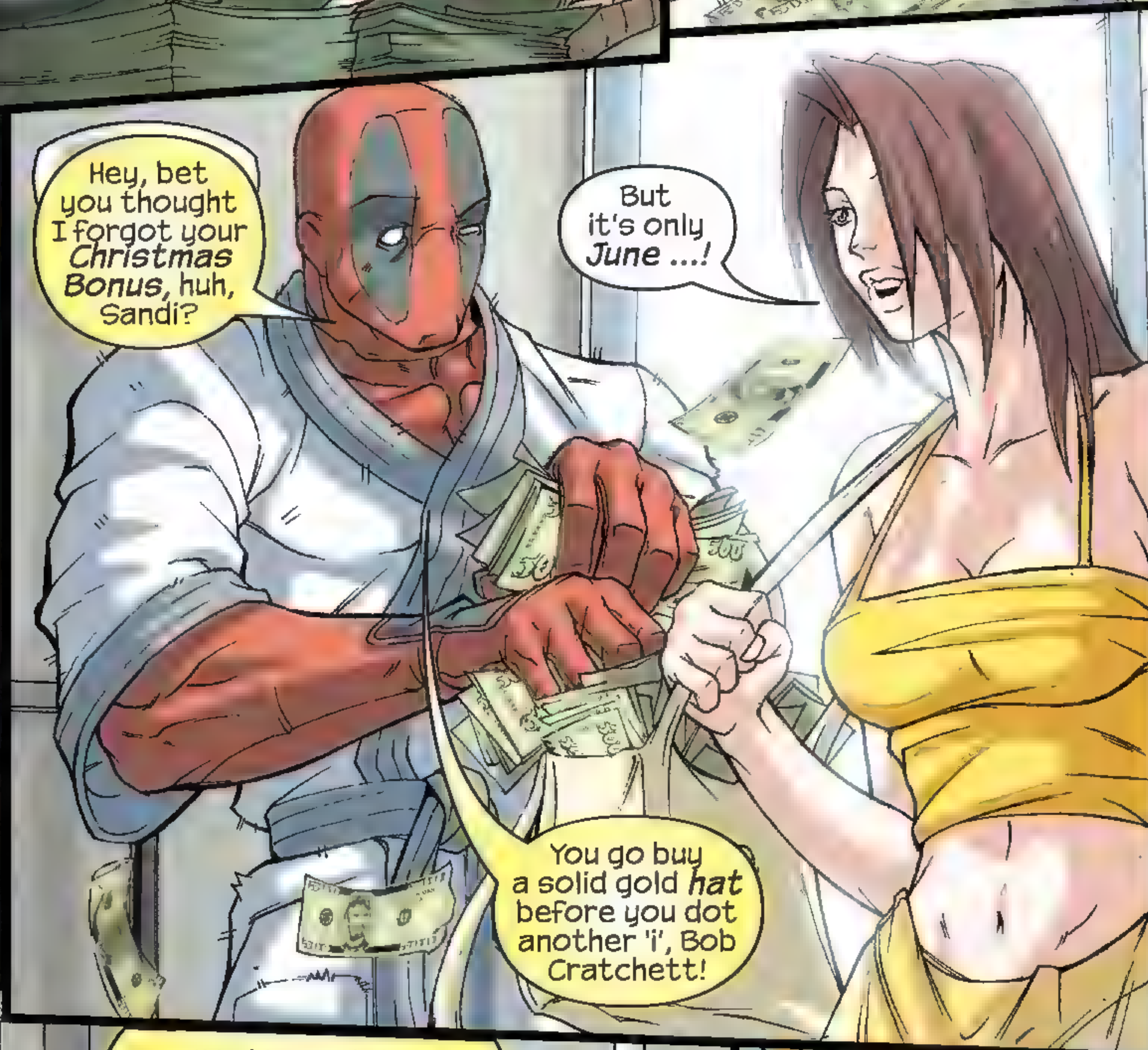
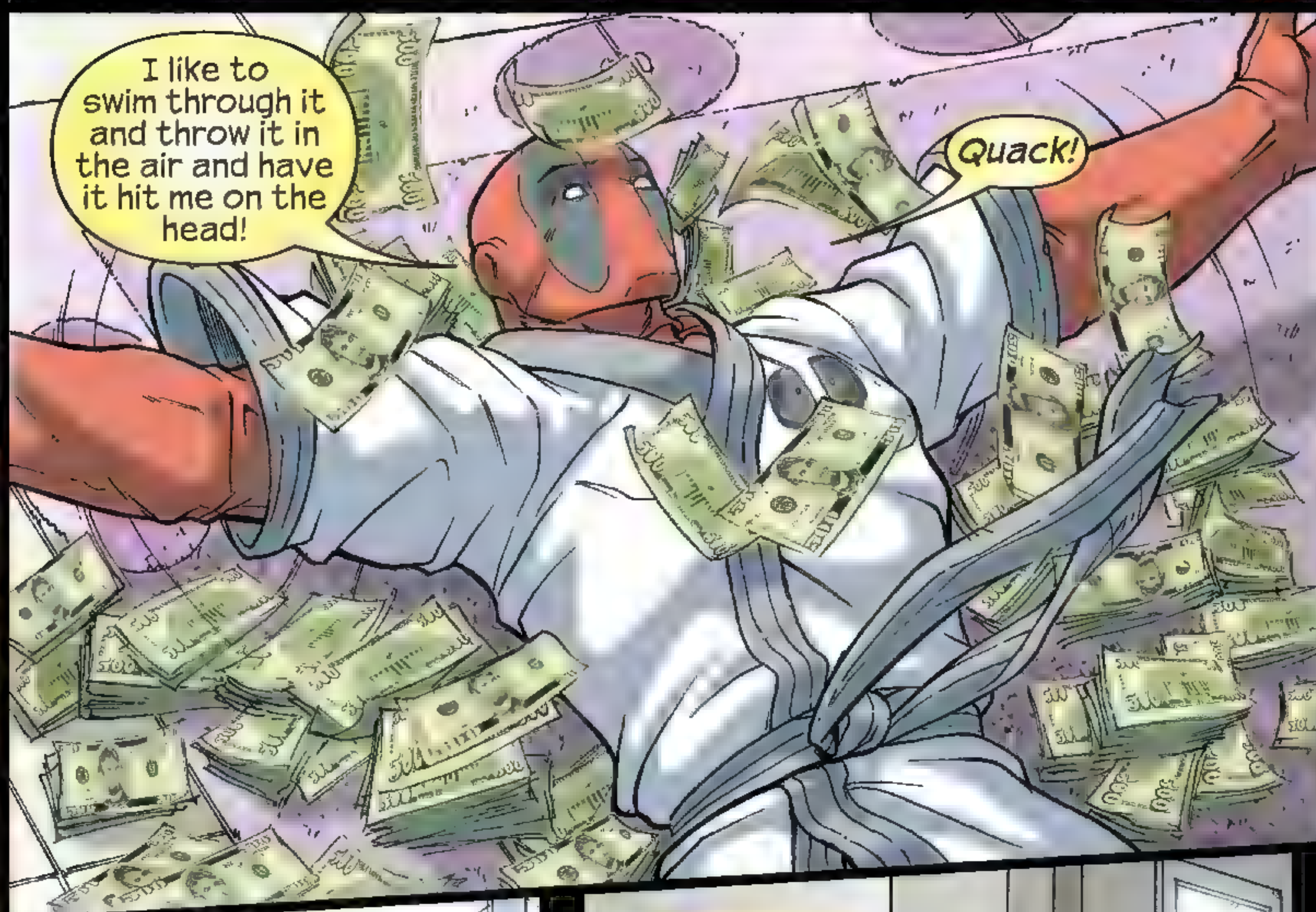
Edited by
Mike Marts

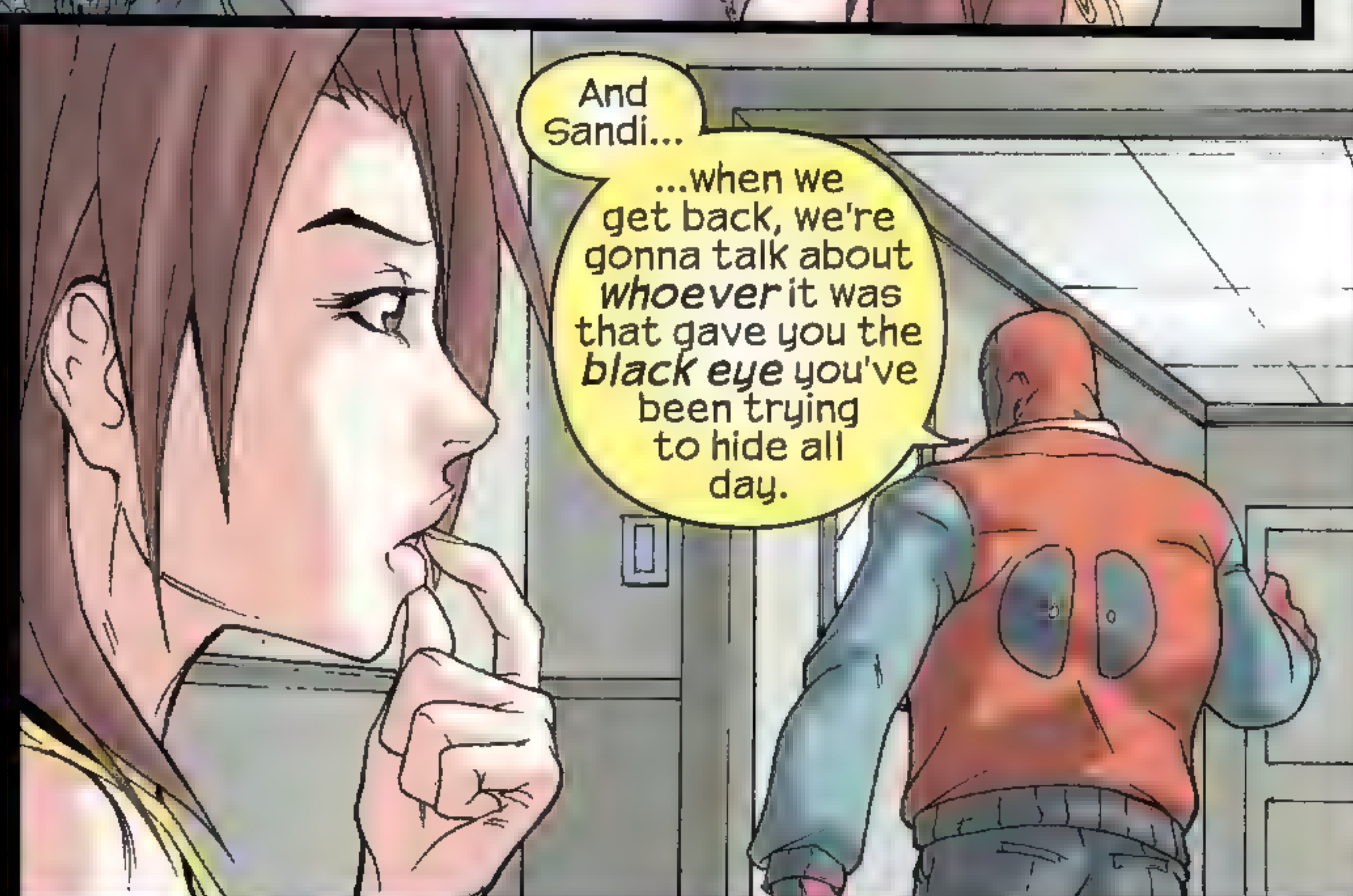
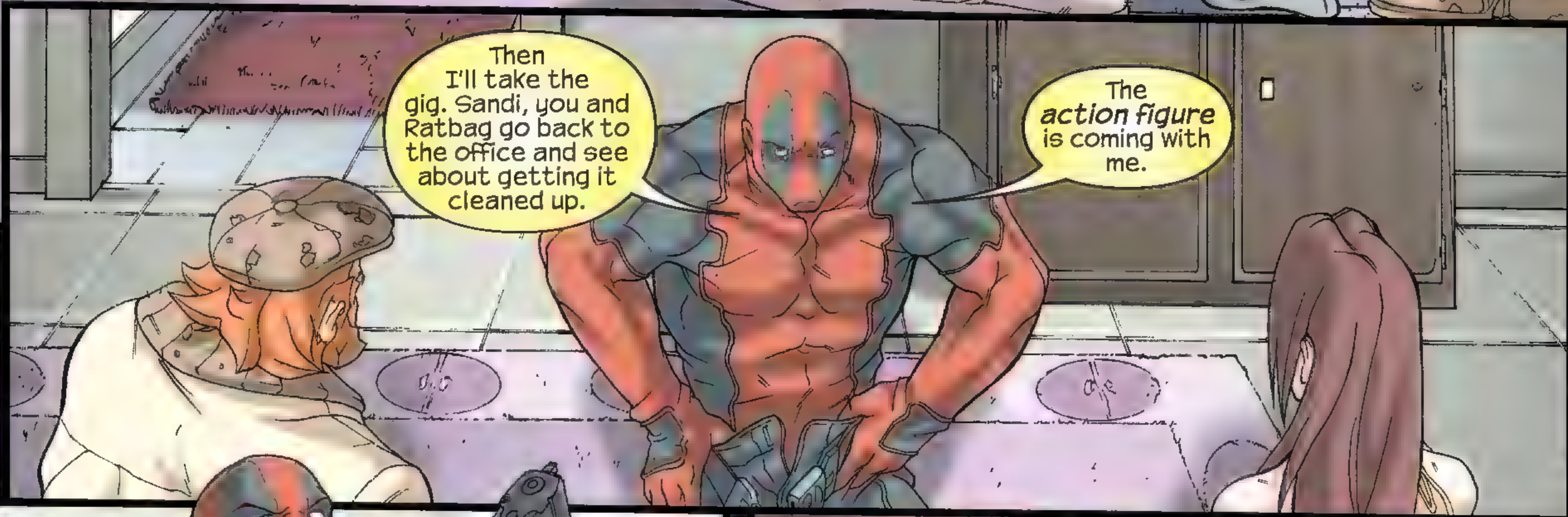
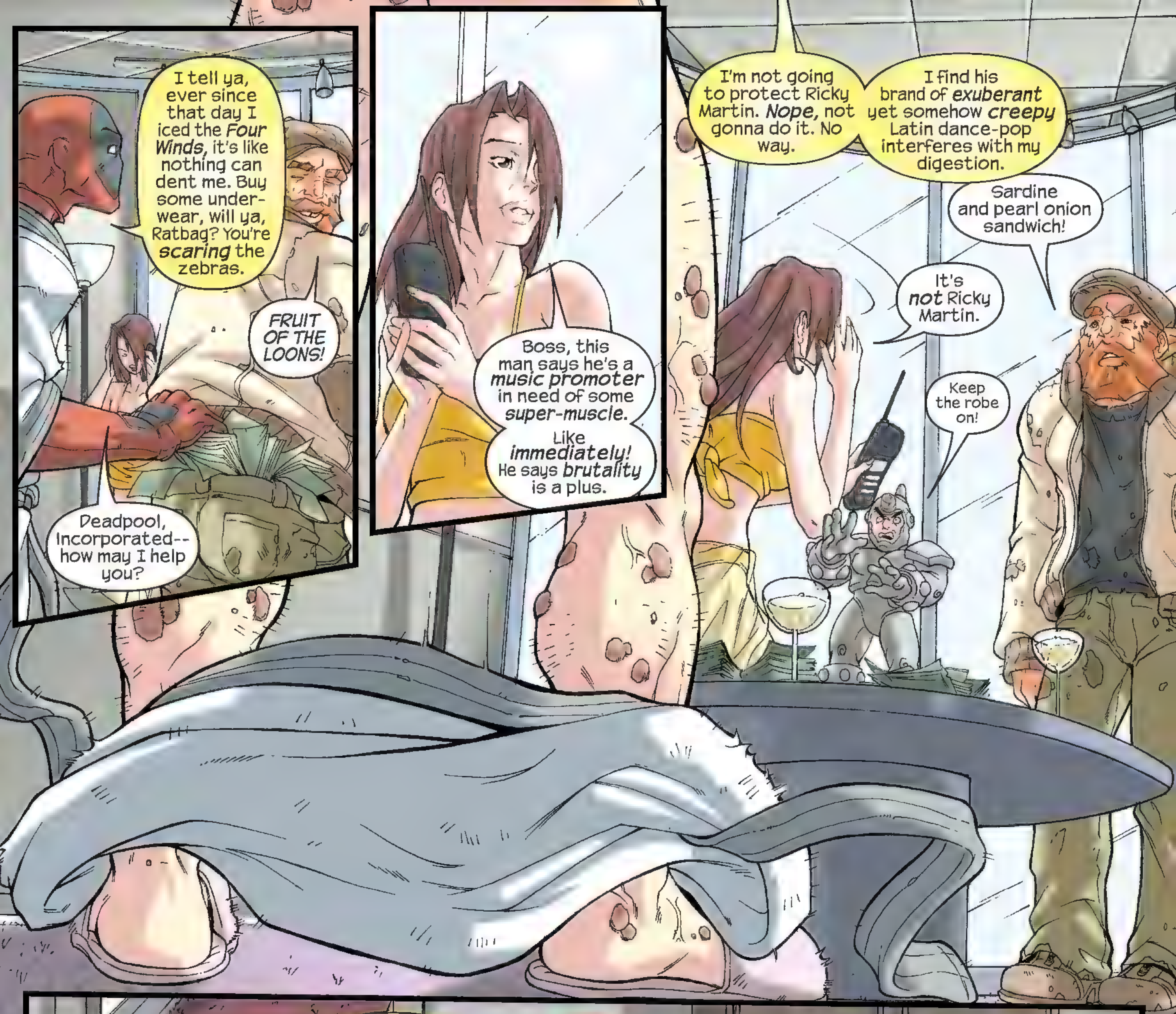
Assisted by
Mike Raicht

Chief
Joe Quesada

President
Bill Jemas

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Okay,
Boss...if you
say so.

Elsewhere, in the
eye of madness ...



I've never *killed*
anyone before.

It'd be all right if my head would
stop spinning. I feel like I'm part
of what's wrong here. Like what's
going to happen is *my* fault.



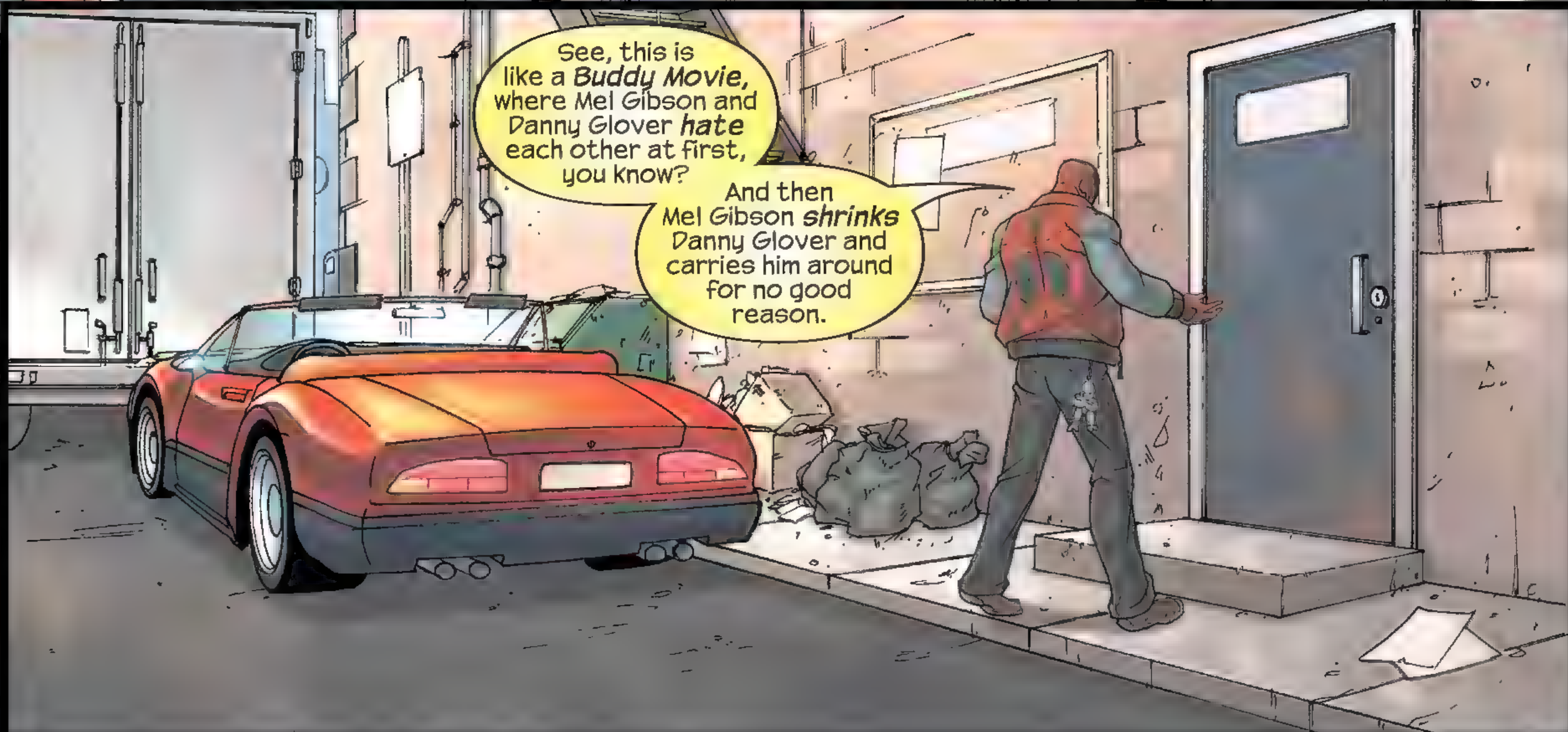
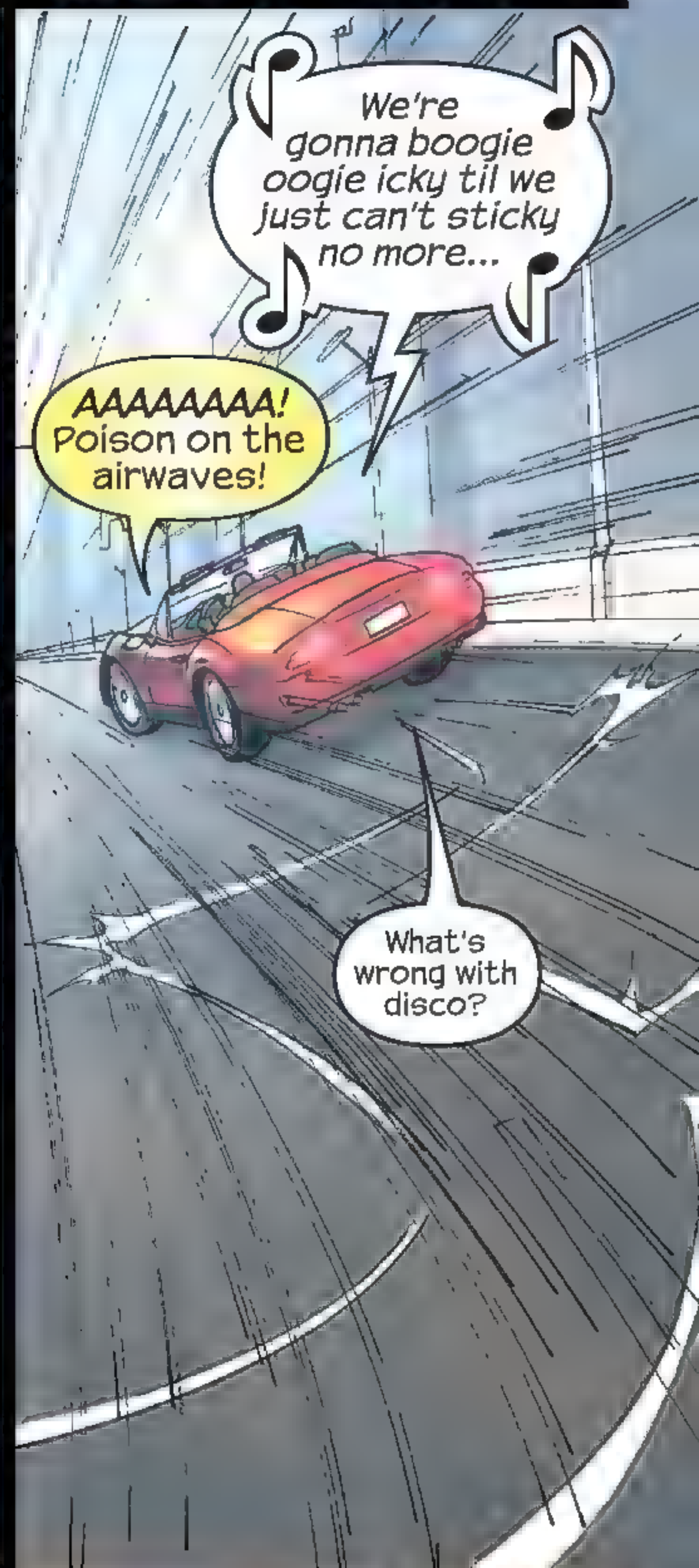
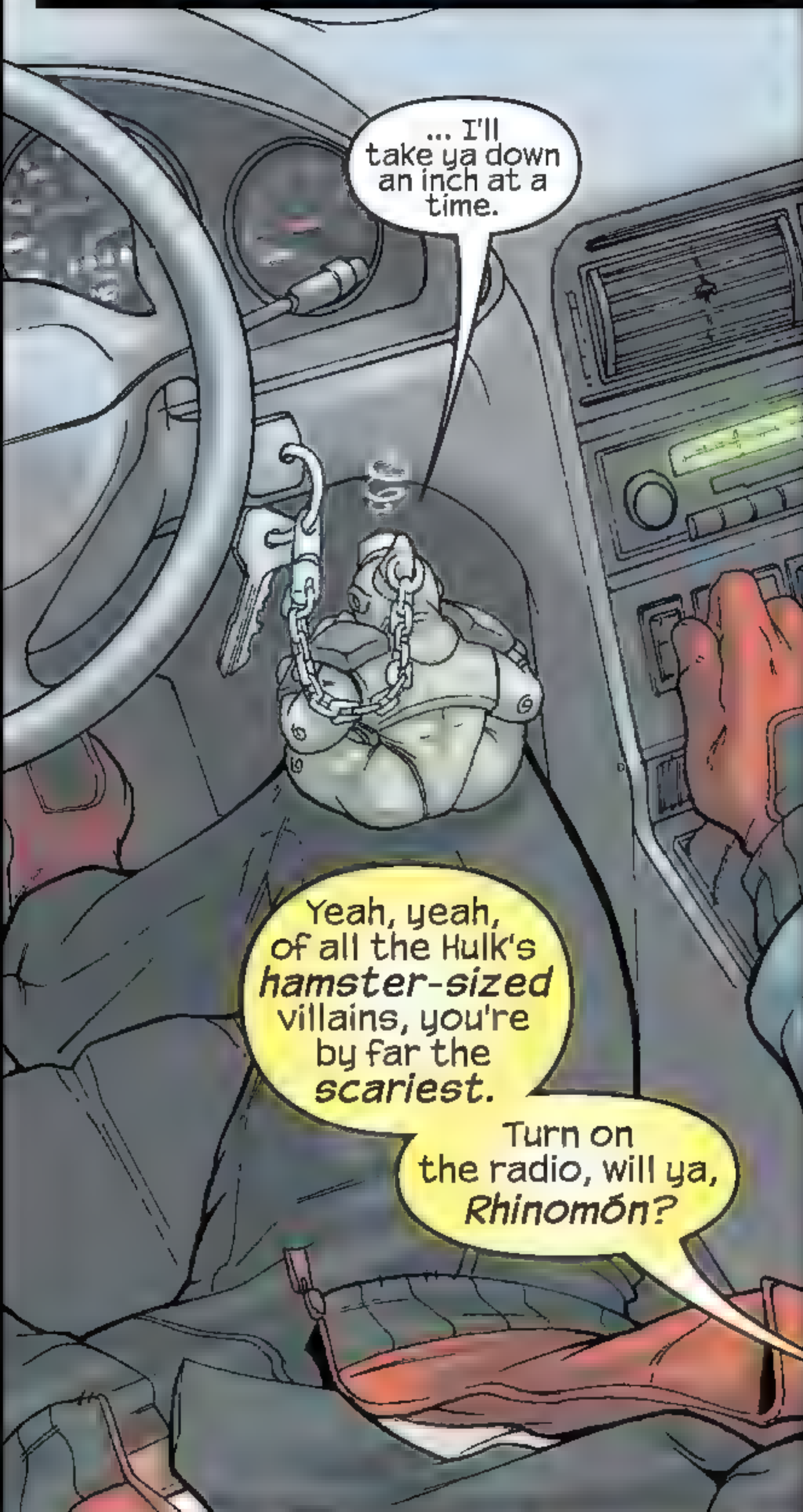
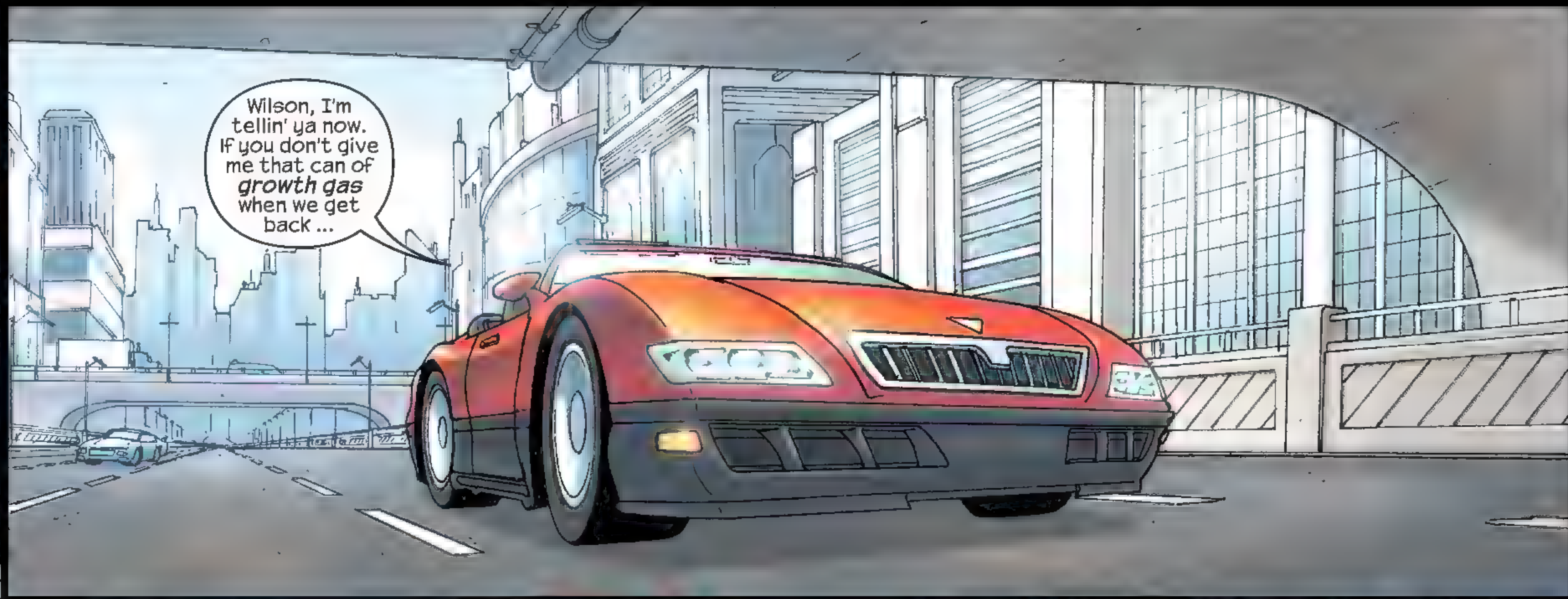
It's not too late. I could still
back out. I could still *go*
home. But that would show
weakness to the enemy.



I've never
killed anyone
before.

But I'm a
fast learner.

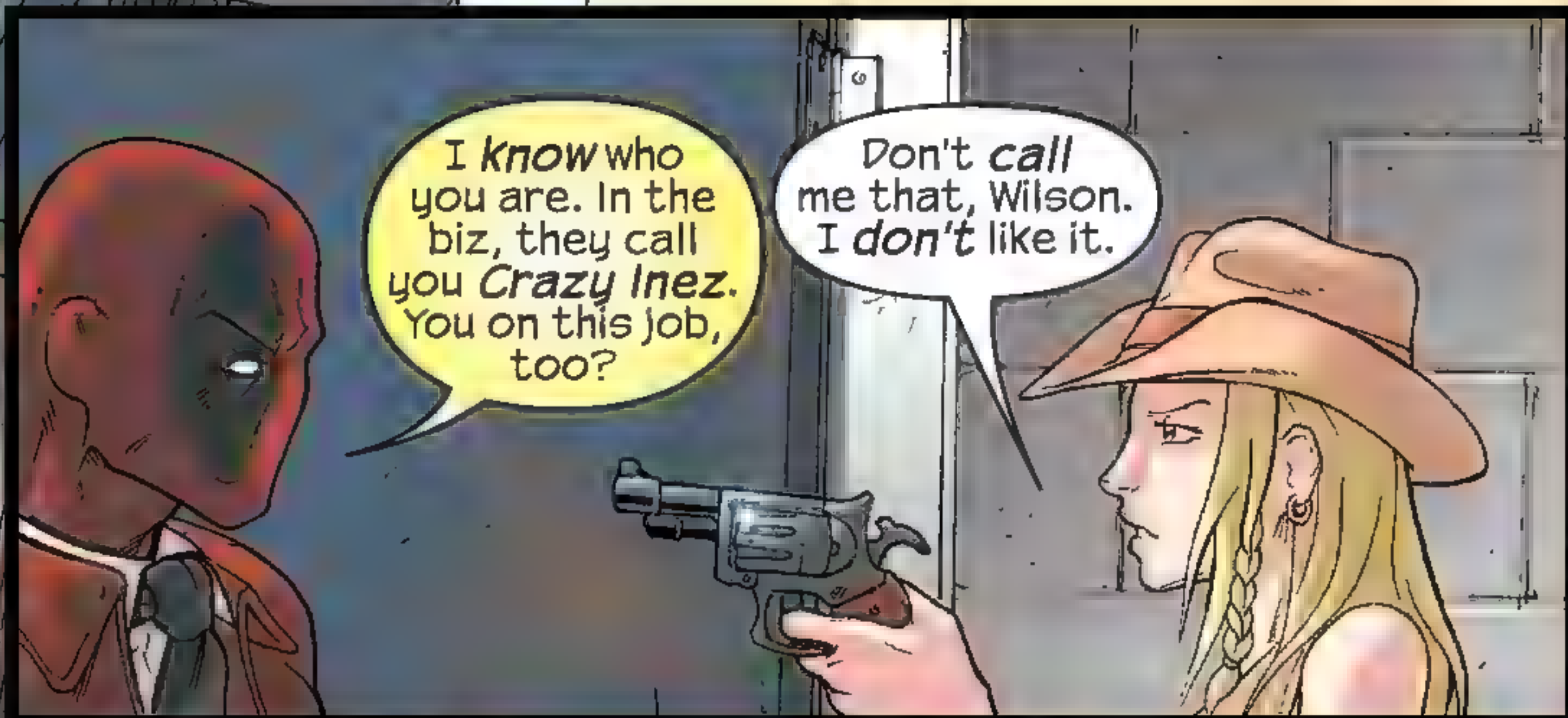






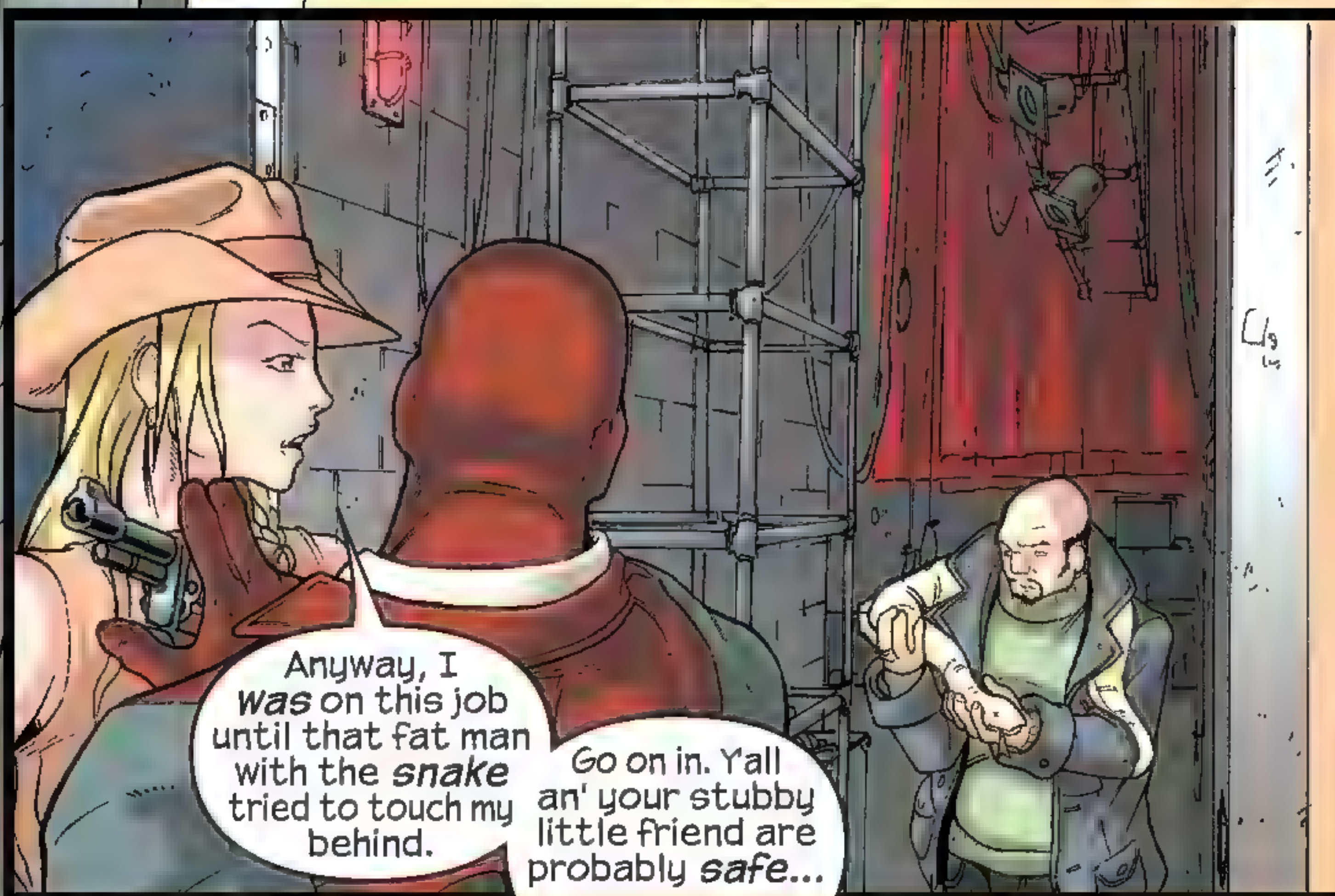
Well, well, well. Lookie here. It's Mr. I-Shot-The-Four-Winds, ain't it? I never properly *introduced* myself at the gym the other day.

Name's *Outlaw*.



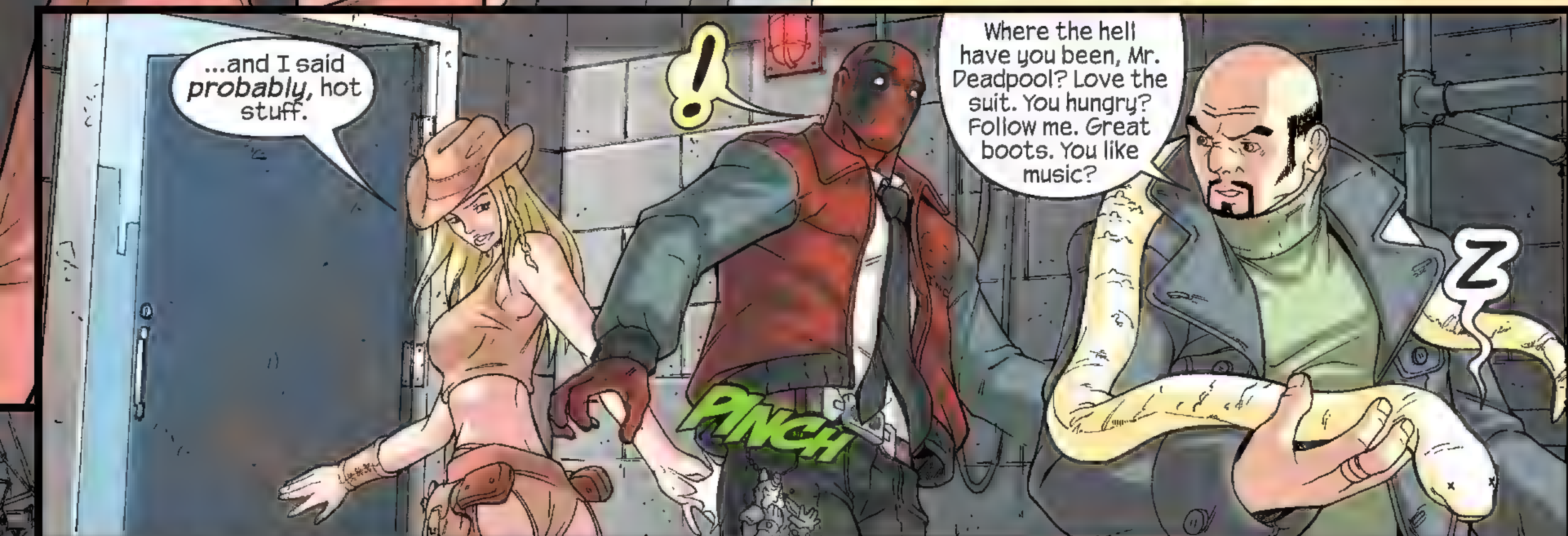
I *know* who you are. In the biz, they call you *Crazy Inez*. You on this job, too?

Don't *call* me that, Wilson. I *don't* like it.



Anyway, I *was* on this job until that fat man with the *snake* tried to touch my behind.

Go on in. Y'all an' your stubby little friend are probably *safe*...



...and I said *probably*, hot stuff.

Where the hell have you been, Mr. Deadpool? Love the suit. You hungry? Follow me. Great boots. You like music?

PINCH



That witch is *nuts*. She's lala-gaga. You know her?

Yeah, she thinks my tractor's sexy.



Now, you *have* got, like, *powers*, right?

Don't worry--I'm a *Superfreak*.

A Super-freak?

I'm Super-Freaky.

Please don't tell me *this* is the guy I'm supposed to bodyguard.



Hate to do this. It's just a formality, you understand.



Hmm. Is this a test or an ambush?



Now which one of these guys had the crowba--



ARGGGH!

KRAK!

Oh, yeah. That one.



HAHAHAHA! KILL 'IM! KNOCK HIS HEAD IN! HAHAHAHAHA!

Oh, man, this is great!



Uh, oh.



Shortly...

CRUISE MINOR TALENT MANAGEMENT

You understand I had to *test* you, right, Mr. Deadpool? I mean, no hard feelings, okay? You hungry? Is it okay if I call you *DP*?

This is ridiculous. I don't need protection, Cruise. I can handle myself.

Sweetie, we know that! You're *ice cream*, flavorful and sweet -- I'm gaining weight just looking at you!

Mr. Deadpool is just here to *scare* away the *freak*, if he shows. That's all, baby!

See, everyone thought disco was *dead*, right? Turns out, it was just in a *coma* on *life support*. Kids are *lovin'* the stuff, *DP*!

Call it dance, trance, beat, whatever...and *Dazzler's* got a whole new audience, get it?

Then we started getting this *crazy stuff* in the mail, along with threatening letters, all from the same guy.

Let me guess: he *hates mutants*, right?

No.

He hates *disco*.

DISCO--



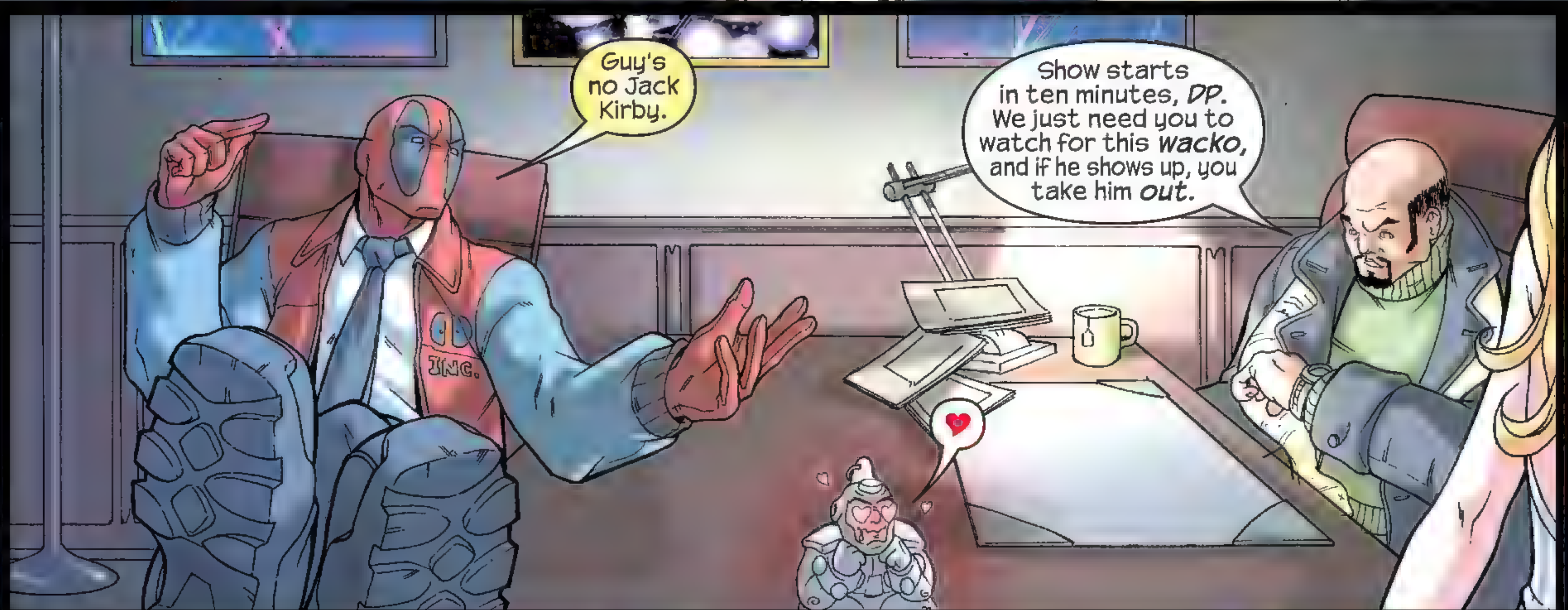
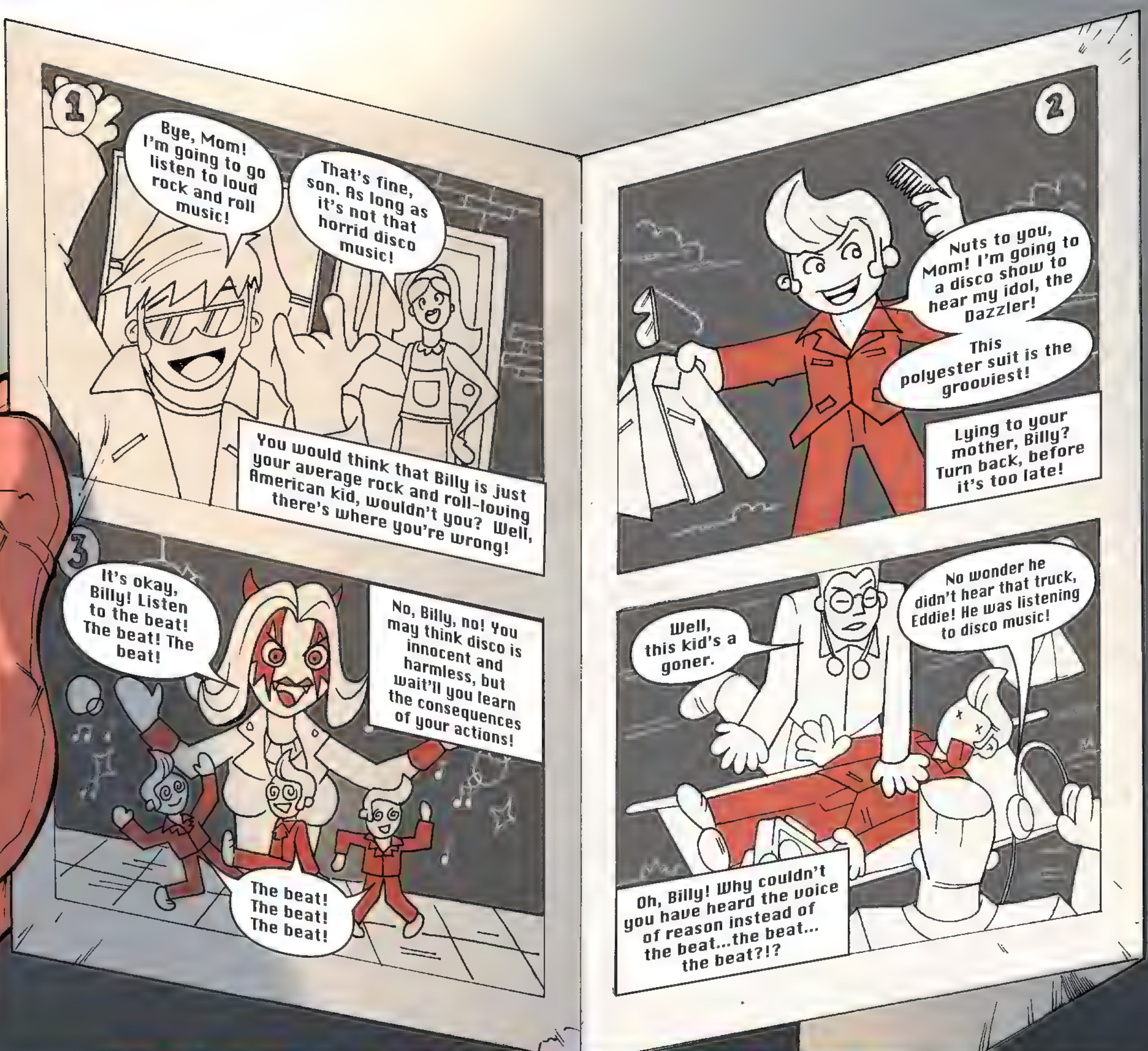
THE DEATH OF
GOOD TASTE?

DAZZLER WILL



DANCE
YOU TO
YOUR DOOM

ELVIS
IS CRYING

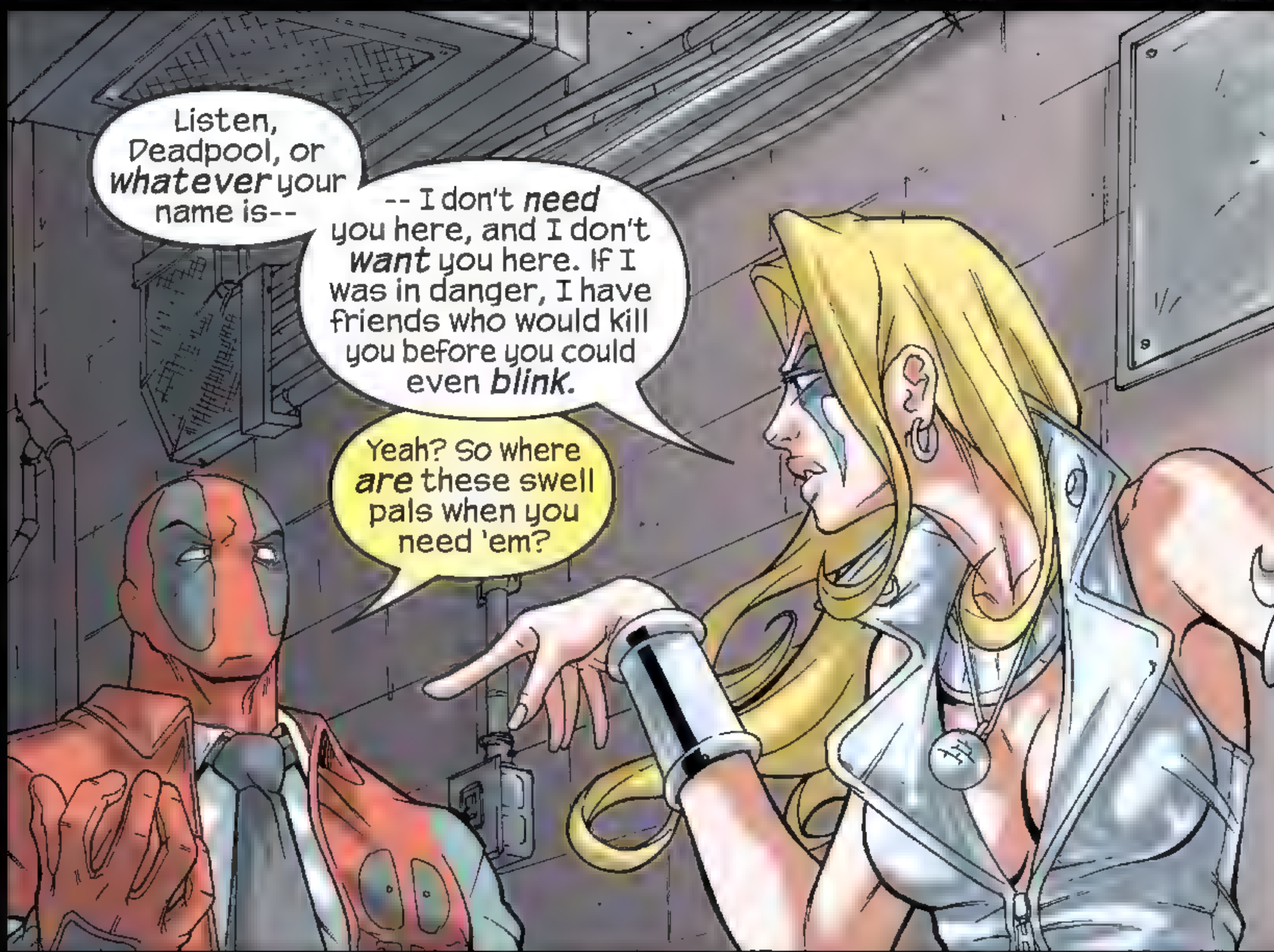




So... handsome or rich?

Excuse me?

Girl like you, her boyfriend's always either handsome or rich. Or both.



Listen, Deadpool, or whatever your name is--

-- I don't *need* you here, and I don't *want* you here. If I was in danger, I have friends who would kill you before you could even *blink*.

Yeah? So where *are* these swell pals when you need 'em?



You just... you just stay out of my way.

Aha. Little sore spot, there...



You big dumb jerk! That was the *Dazzler*! She ain't one of yer bimbos!

OW!

Keep your *teeny* mind on the job, all right?



Ladies and gentlemen! Boys and girls! We live in *dark times*. The people have forgotten *the beat*! But fear not -- for I have *seen* the future, and it is...

FUNKAY!

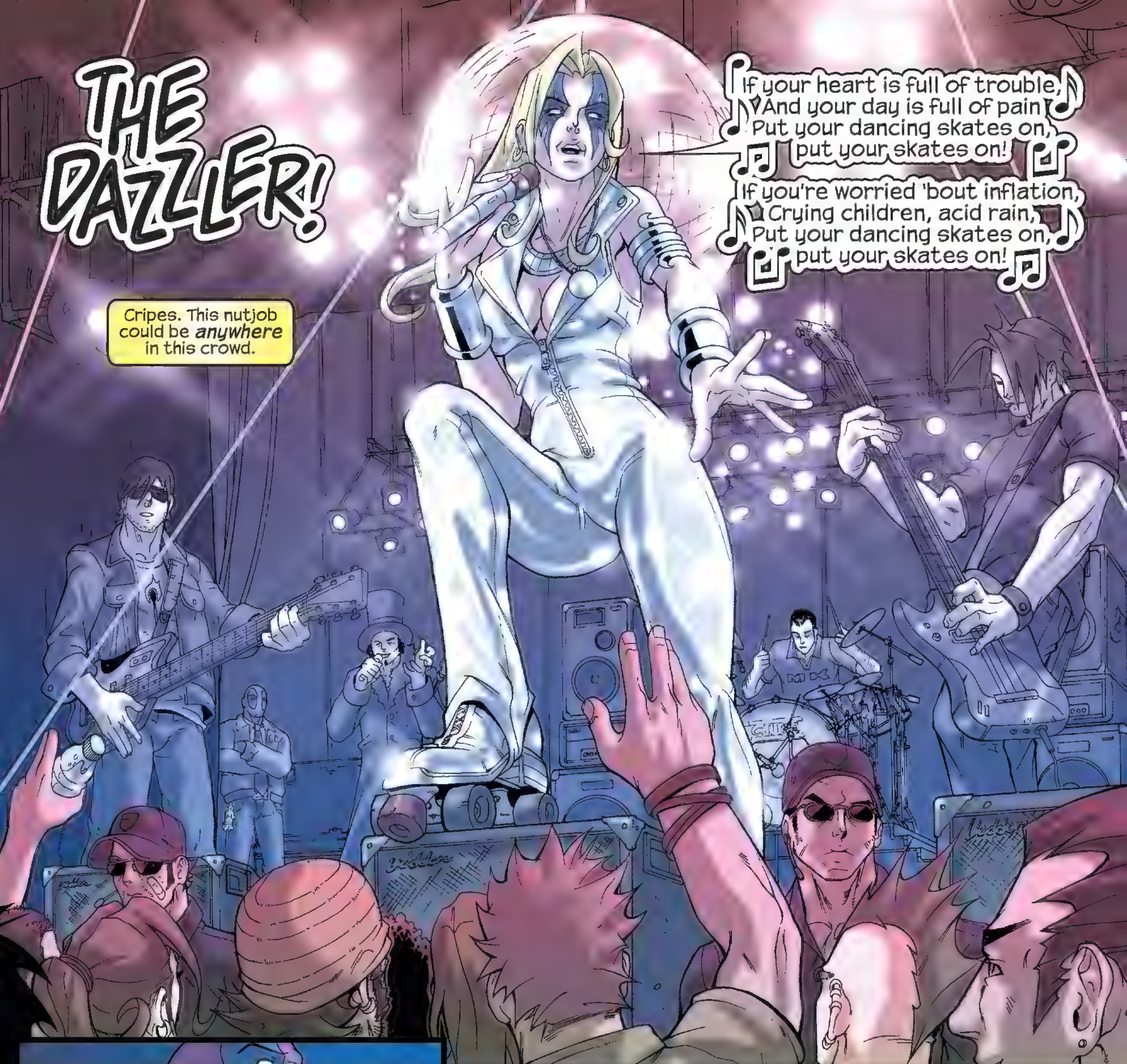
Tonight the Empire Theater is proud to present, after *five years* away from the stage... *Miss. Alison. Blaire!*

THE DAZZLER!

Cripes. This nutjob could be *anywhere* in this crowd.

If your heart is full of trouble,
And your day is full of pain,
Put your dancing skates on,
put your skates on!

If you're worried 'bout inflation,
Crying children, acid rain,
Put your dancing skates on,
put your skates on!



Can't use my *doorknobs* in here. Might hit a *civilian* and lose my whole fee!

Something's going down. I can feel it.

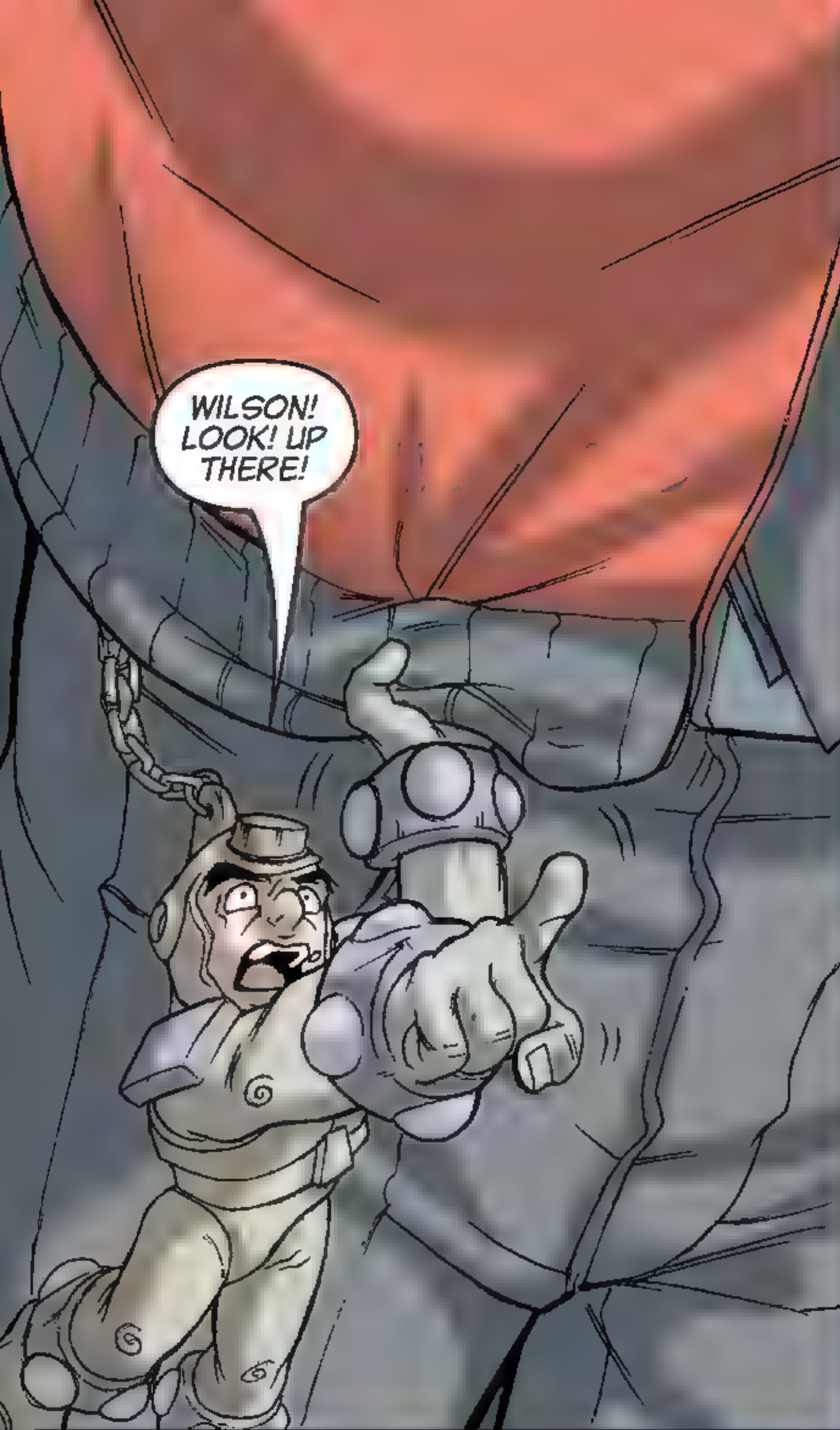
She's devooon!

Like an angel on roller skates, she is.

Yooohoo! Crazy lunatic man! Come out come out and let me beat you senseless, please!



It's time. I can feel it.



WILSON!
LOOK! UP
THERE!



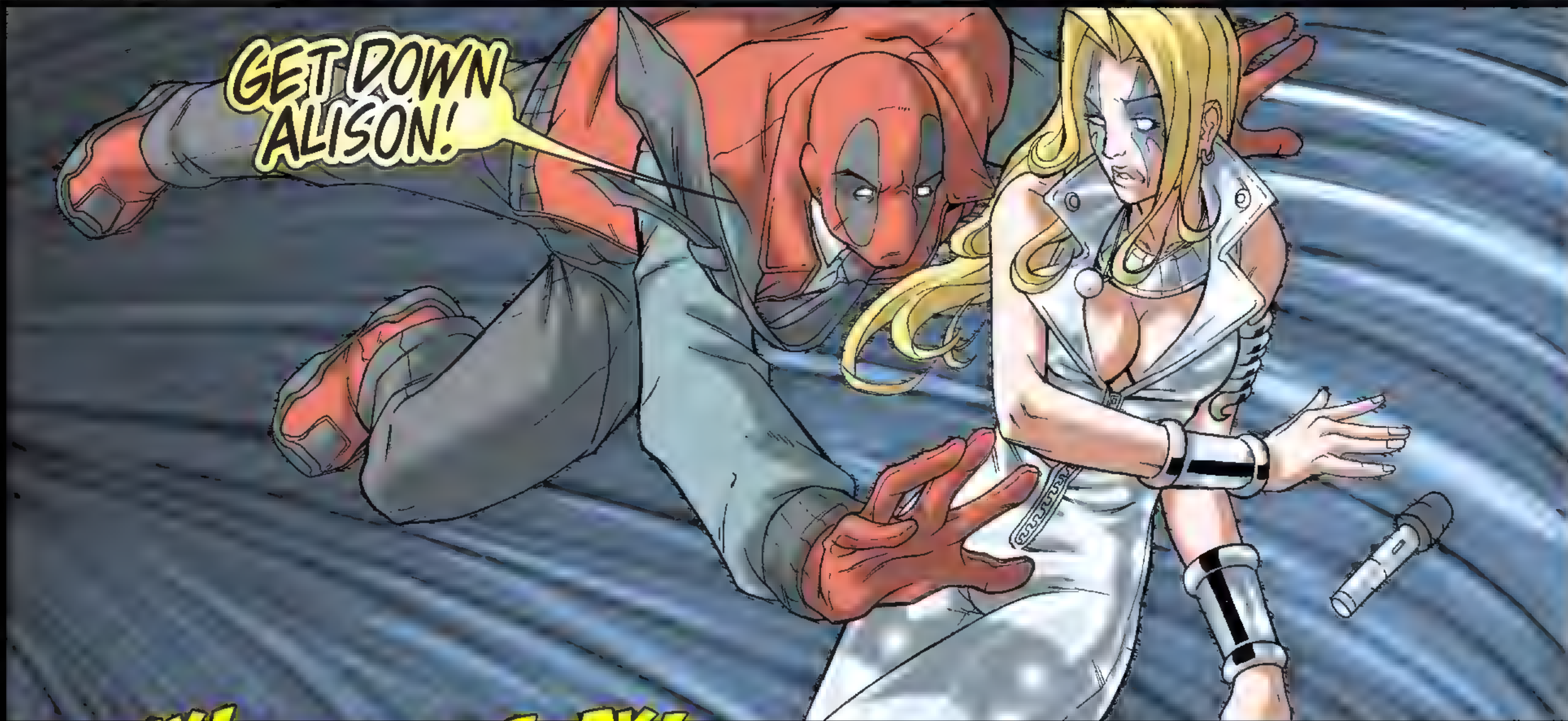
HE'S IN
THE DISCO
BALL!

Quick!
Throw me
at him!



Damn
messed-
up aim!

Wilson, you
idiotoooooot!

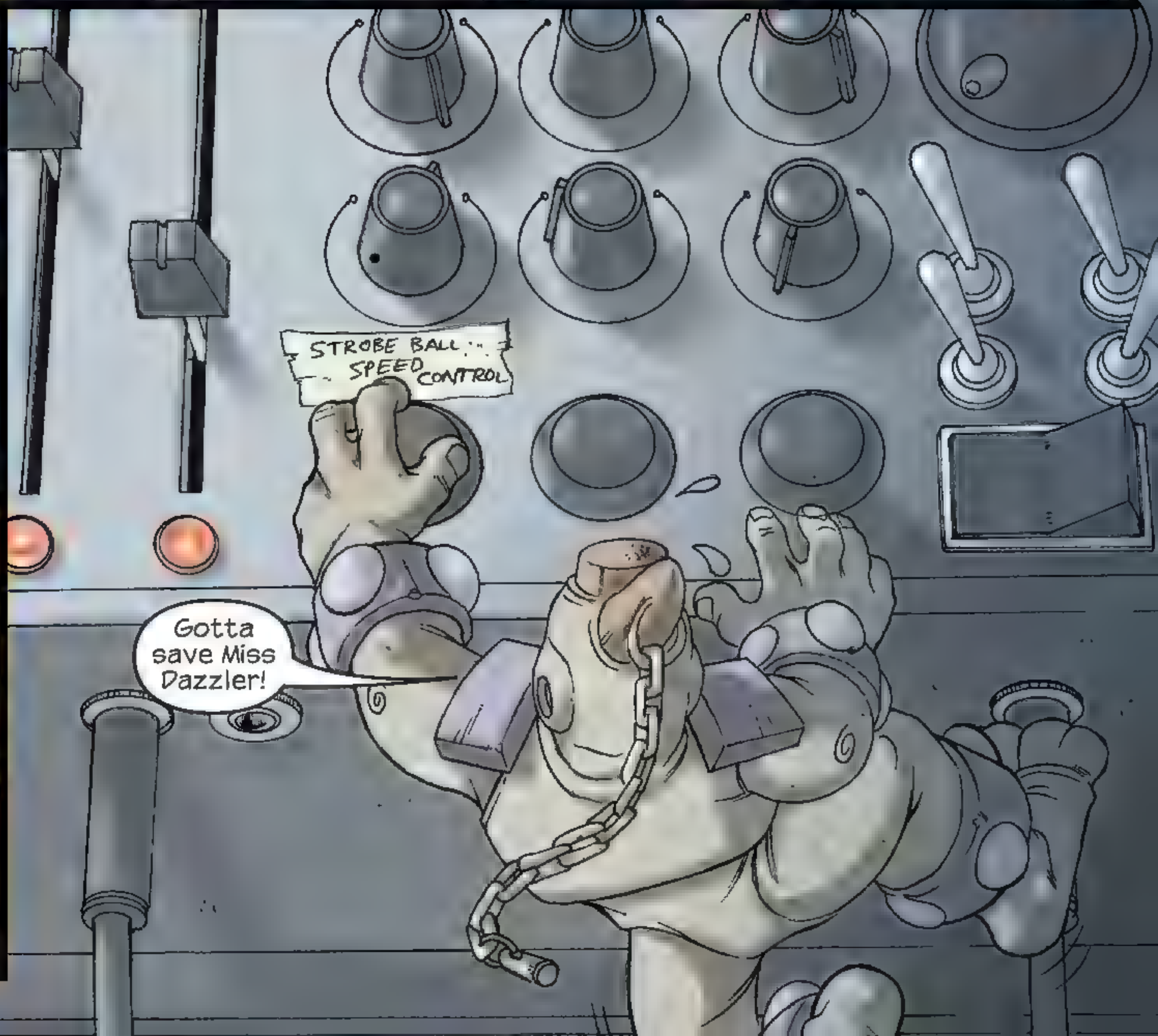


GET DOWN
ALISON!



Ow, ooh, ow!
And I was gonna
use that lung
later...!

Three bullets in the back
already, and I can't leave
the *client*. Swell. I can
hear the wacko *reloading*,
too. How *nice*.



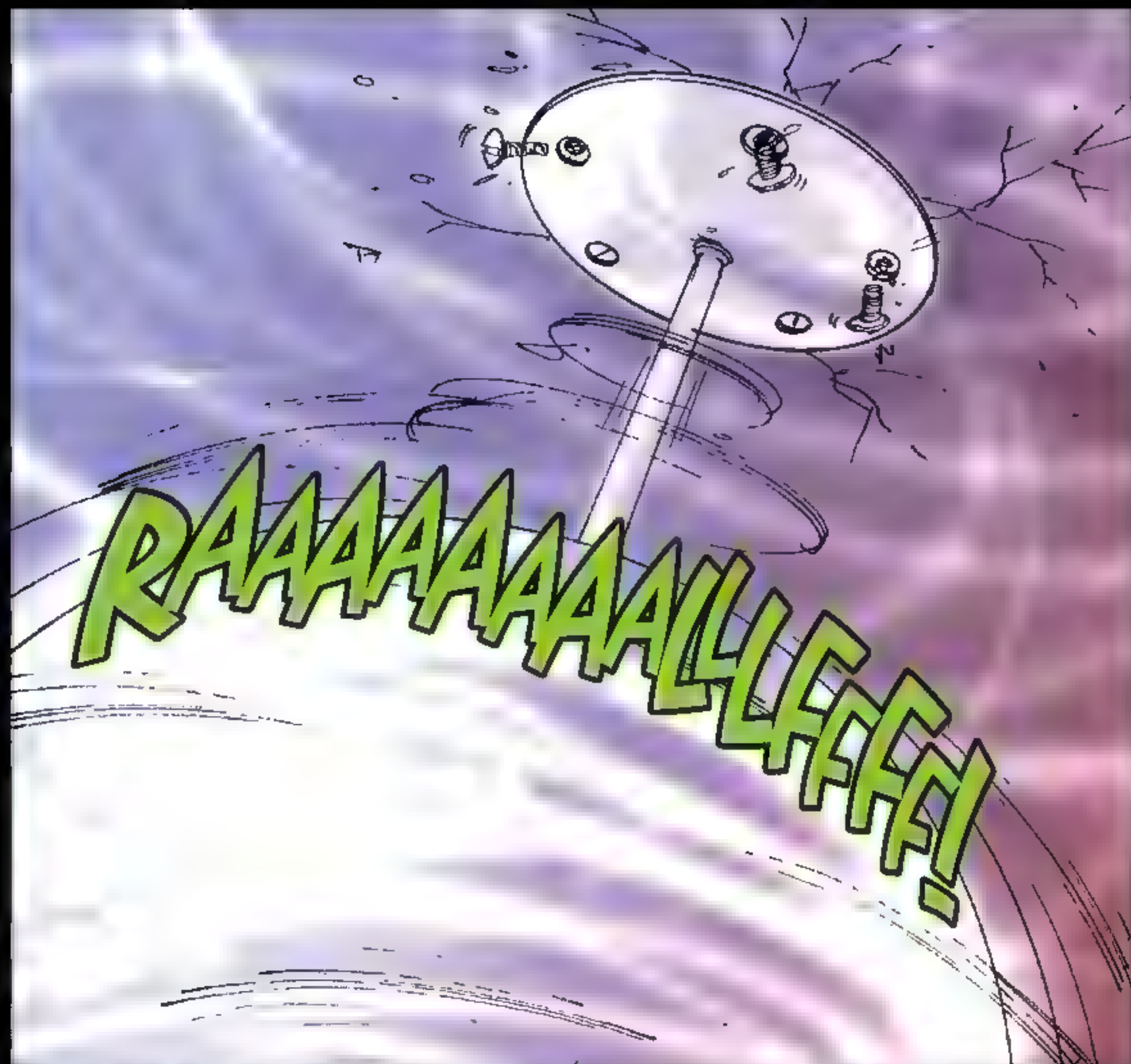
STROBE BALL
SPEED CONTROL

Gotta
save Miss
Dazzler!

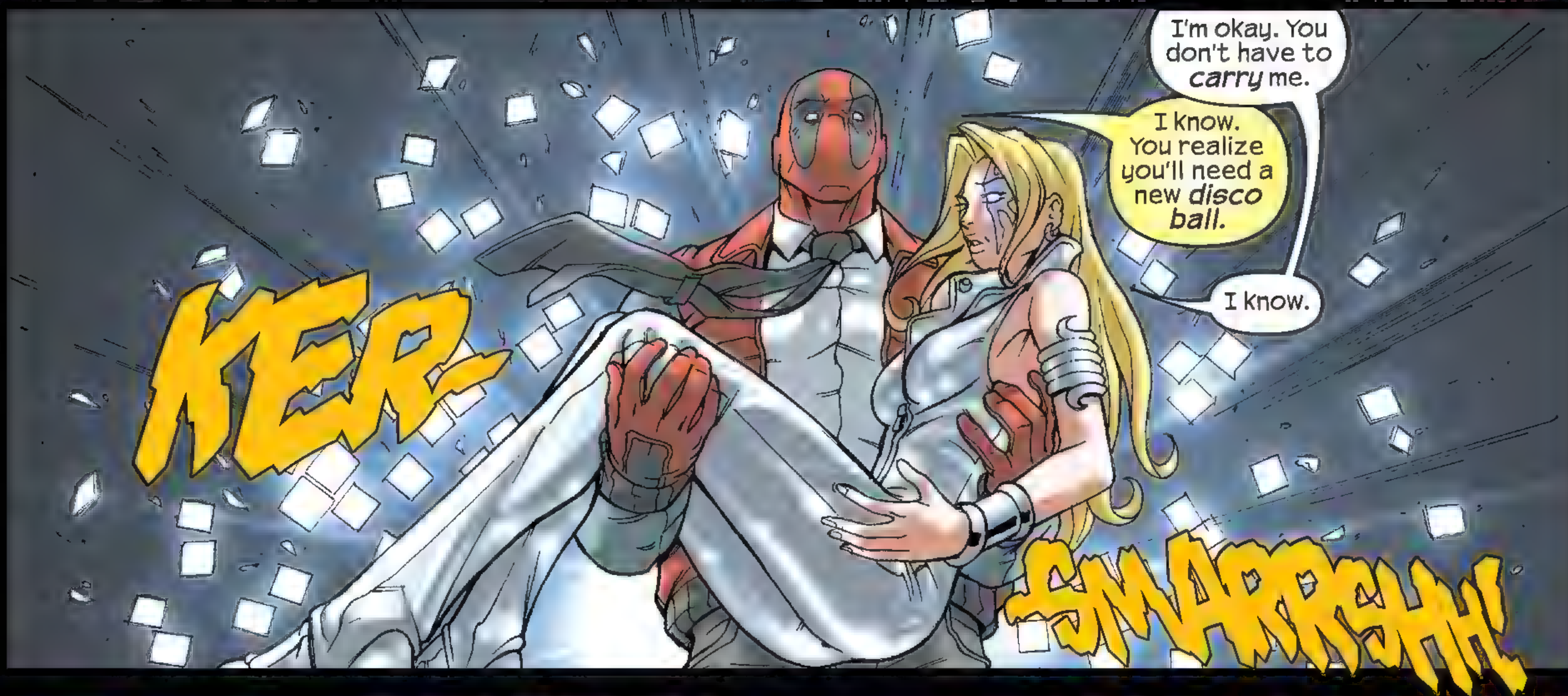


Maybe inside the ball wasn't the smartest place to hide.

I'm gonna... I'm gonna...



RAAAAAAAAAALLLFFFI!



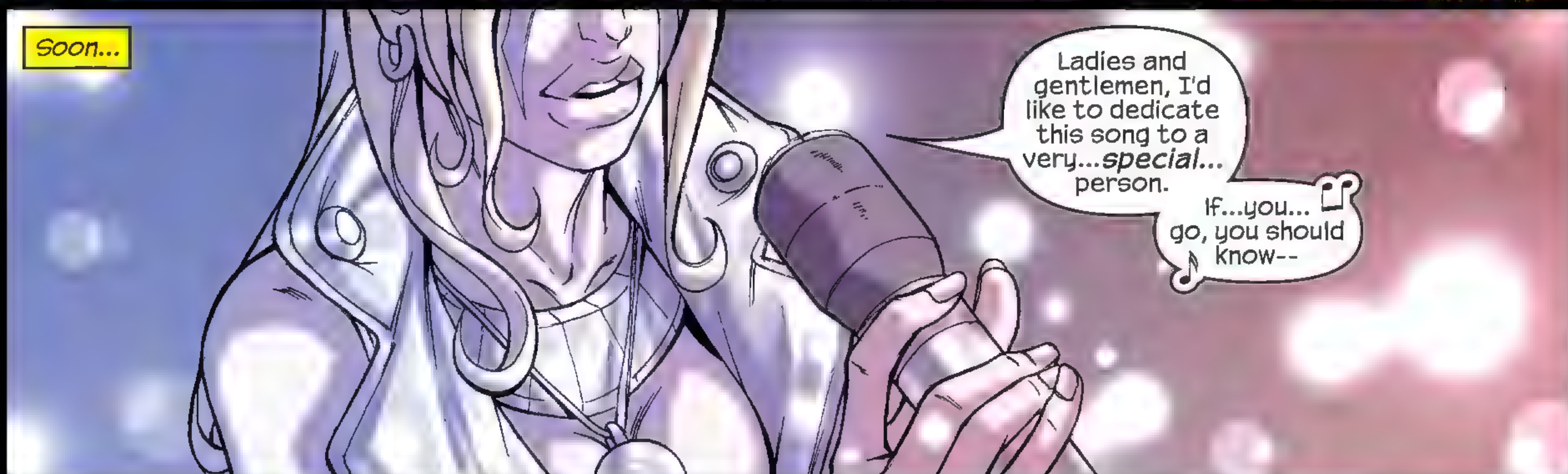
I'm okay. You don't have to carry me.

I know. You realize you'll need a new disco ball.

I know.

KER

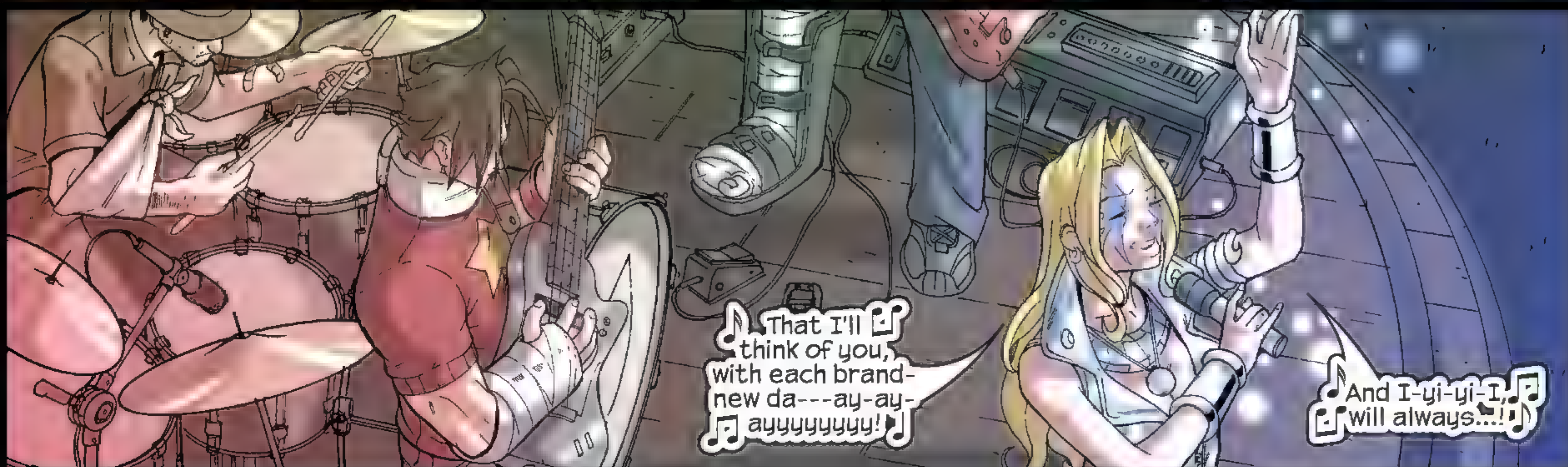
SMASH!



Soon...

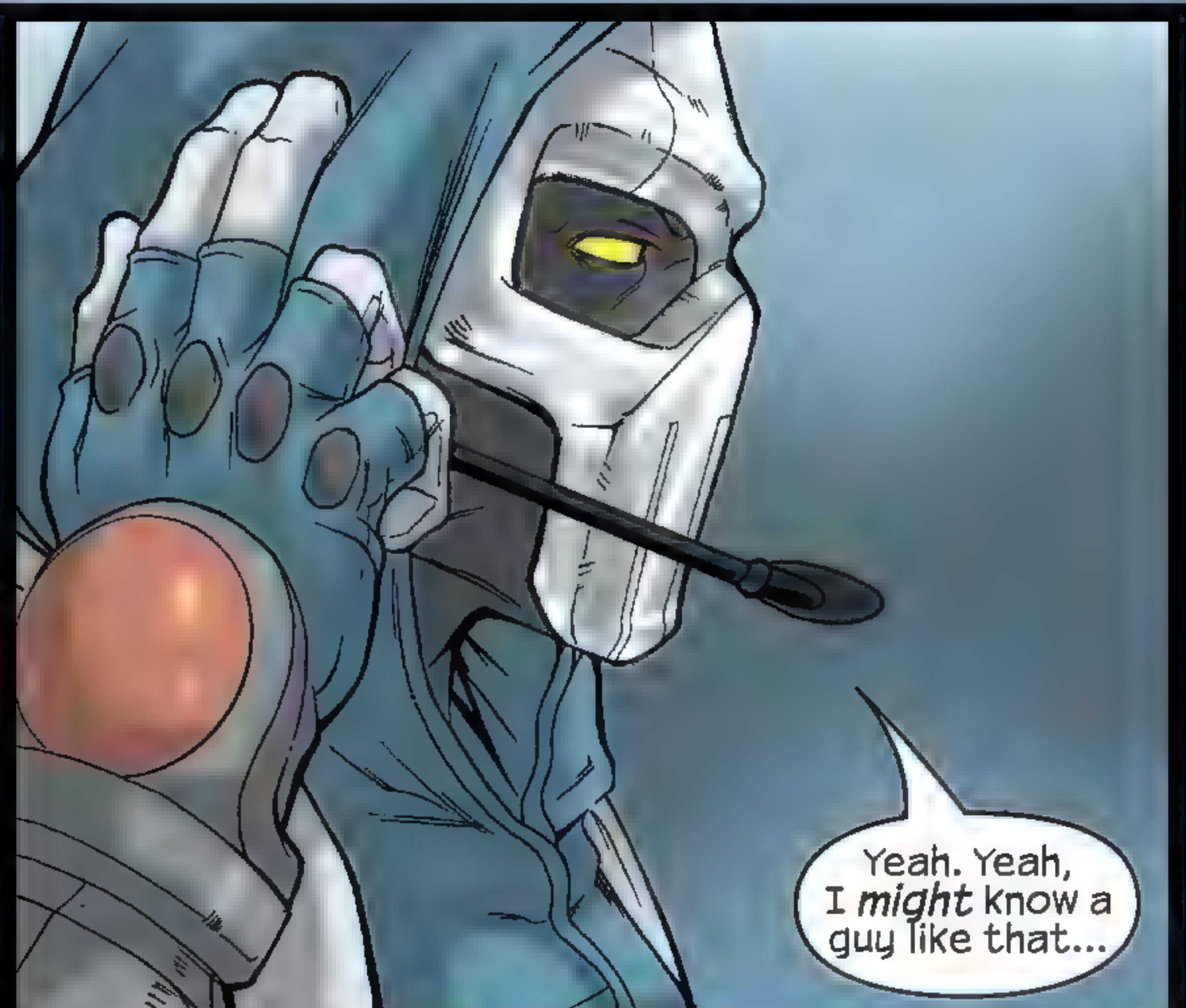
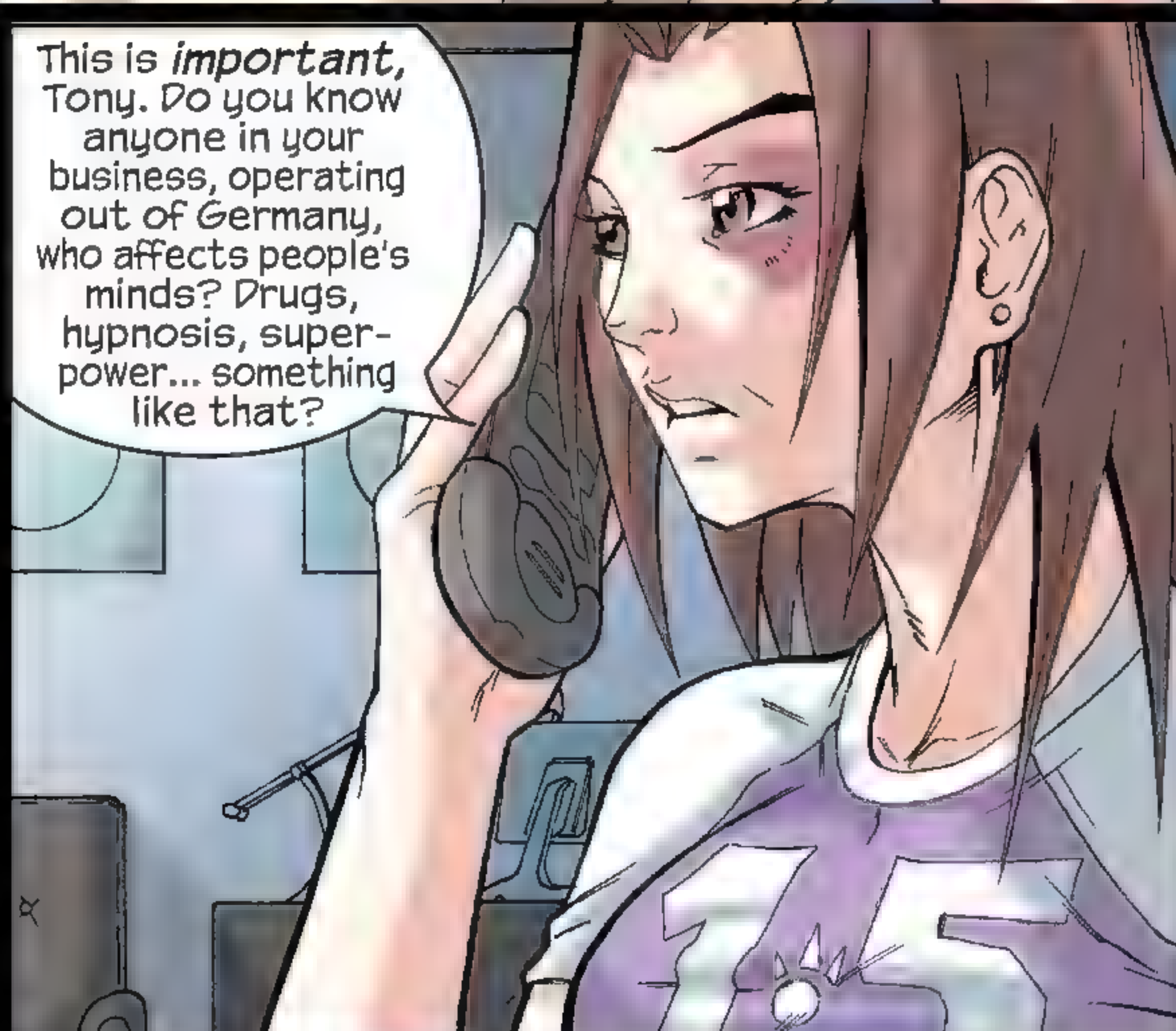
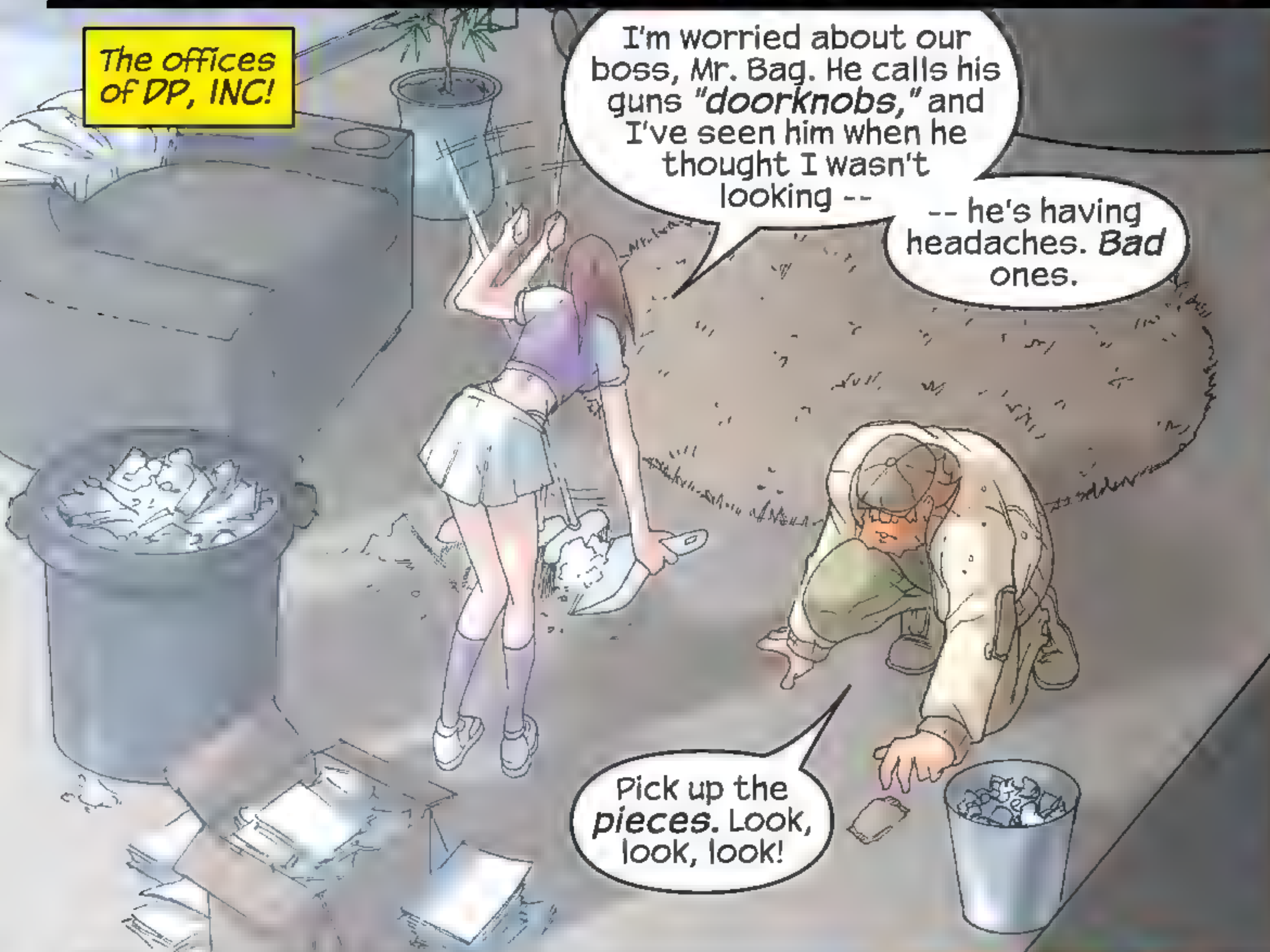
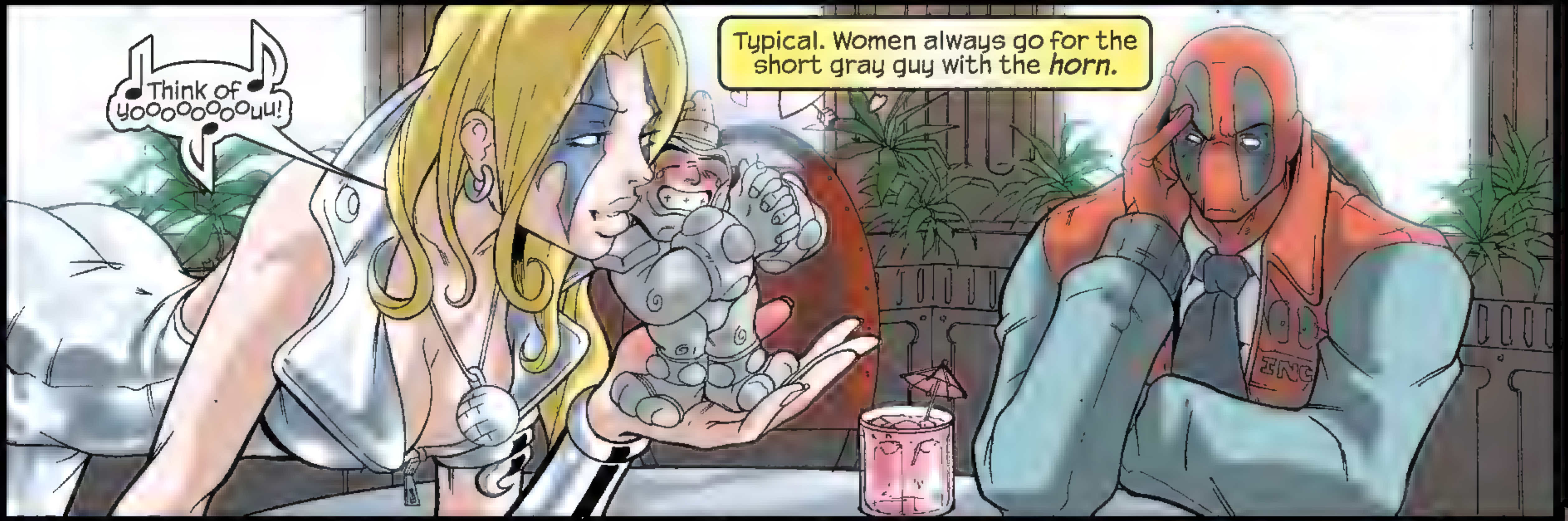
Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to dedicate this song to a very...special... person.

If...you... go, you should know--



That I'll think of you, with each brand-new da---ay-ay-ayyyyyyy!

And I-yi-yi-I will always...

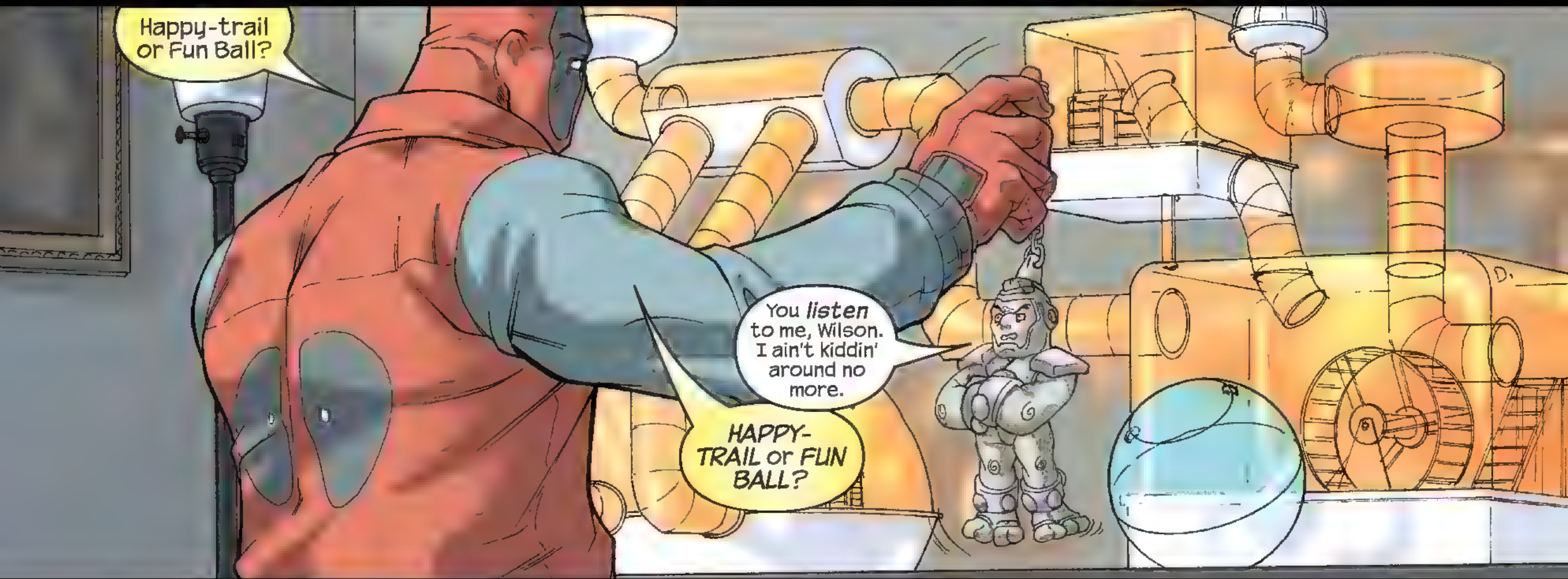




And that's it, really.
That's what *ruined* our
buddy movie. A *woman*.

... you really
screwed up,
Wilson. Alison
coulda been
killed.

And the
music-loving
world would
thank me.



Happy-trail
or Fun Ball?

You *listen*
to me, Wilson.
I ain't kiddin'
around no
more.

HAPPY-
TRAIL or FUN
BALL?



Fun
Ball.

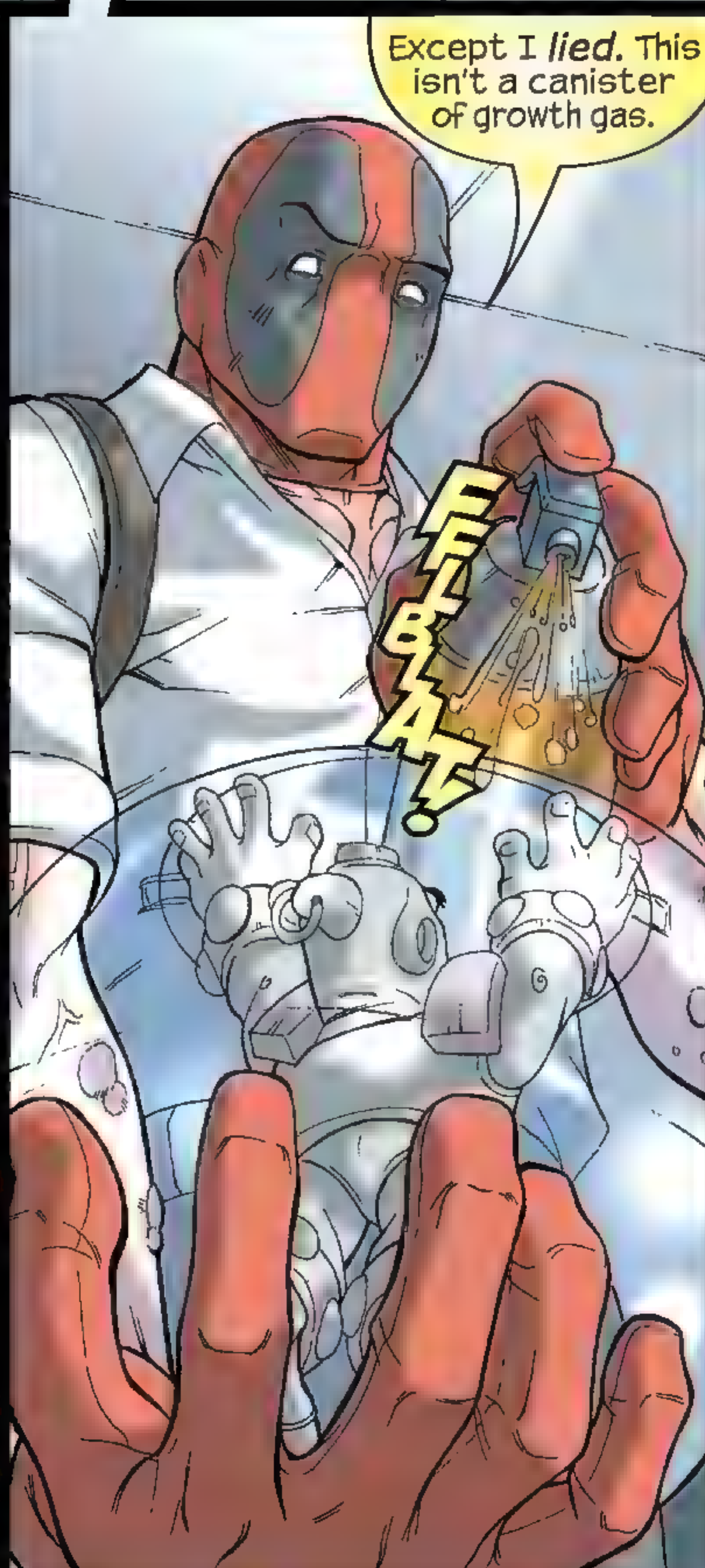
Good.
Love the Fun
Ball!

We ain't
through *talkin'*,
Wilson!

I'm about
ta get *peev*ed
again!

tktk

tktktk





See, all along, I only had Ant-Man's *shrinking* canister. I don't know what happened --

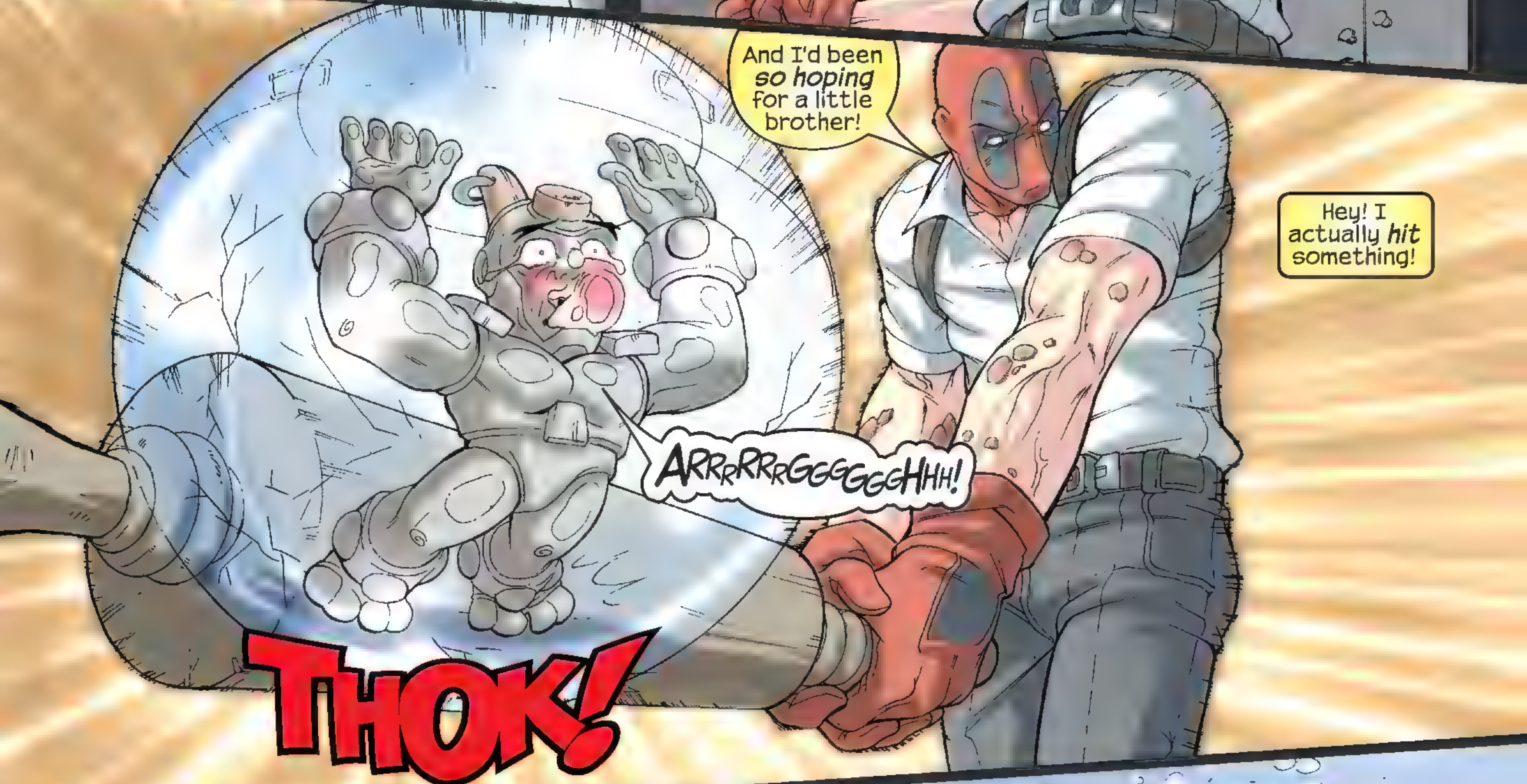
-- maybe it sat in that trophy case for too long and catalyzed.

Maybe the effects will wear off, or *maybe* they won't.



But you're just too damn *annoying* to keep around.

Do it! Do it, you *gutless* piece of...

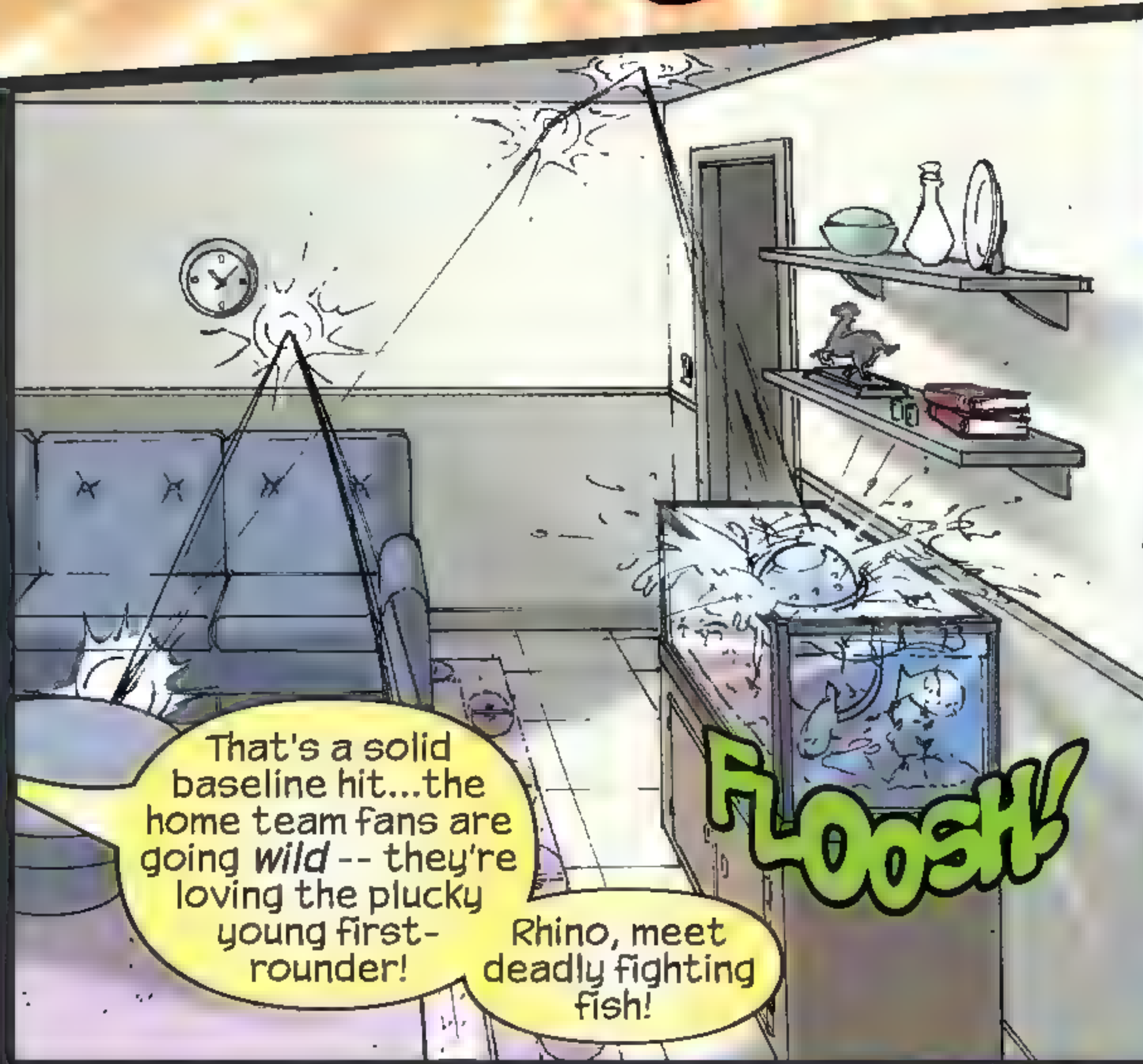


And I'd been *so hoping* for a little brother!

Hey! I actually *hit* something!

ARRRRRRGGGGGGHHH!

THOK!



That's a solid baseline hit...the home team fans are going *wild* -- they're loving the plucky young first-rounder!

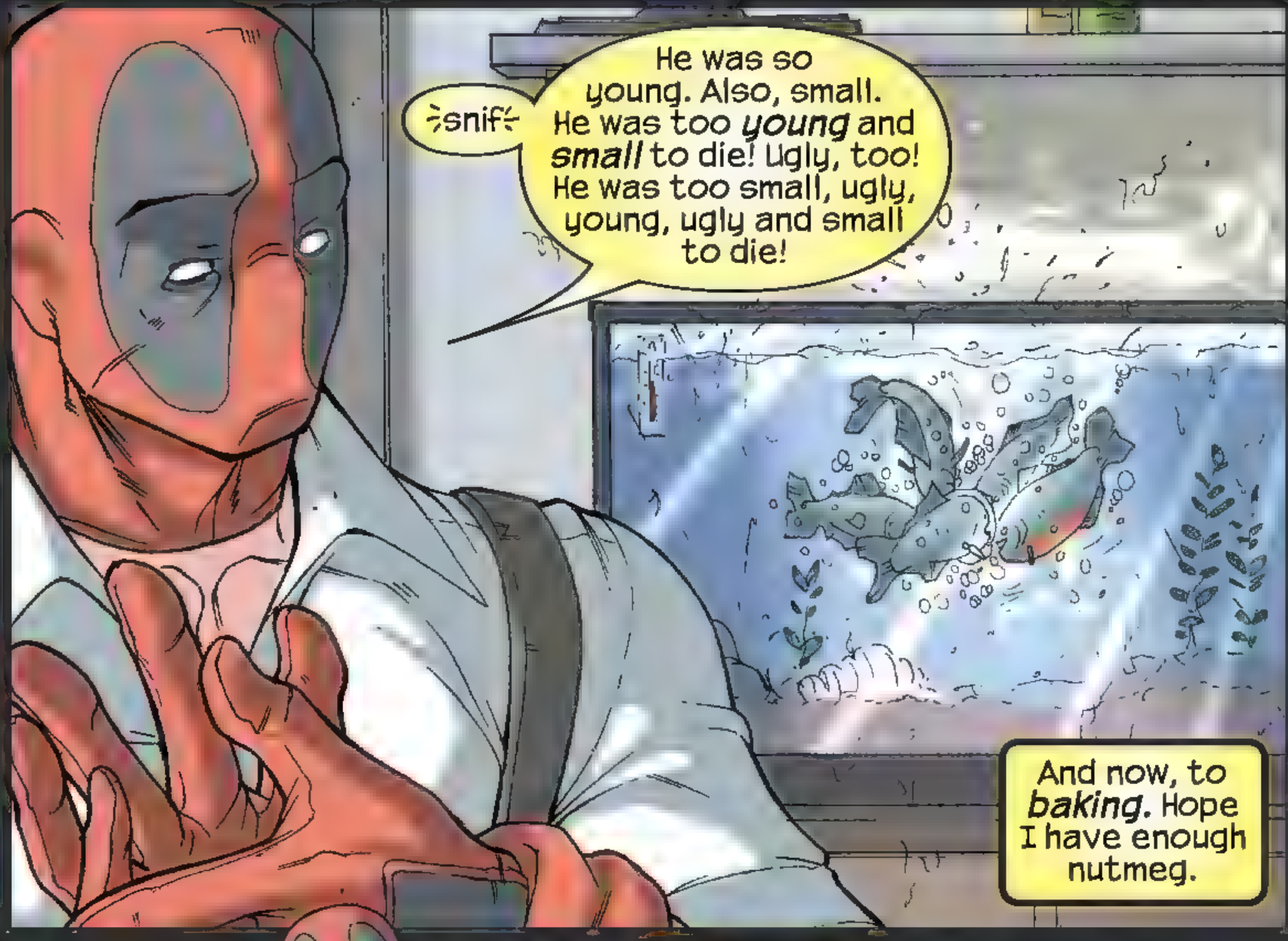
Rhino, meet deadly fighting fish!

FLOOSH!



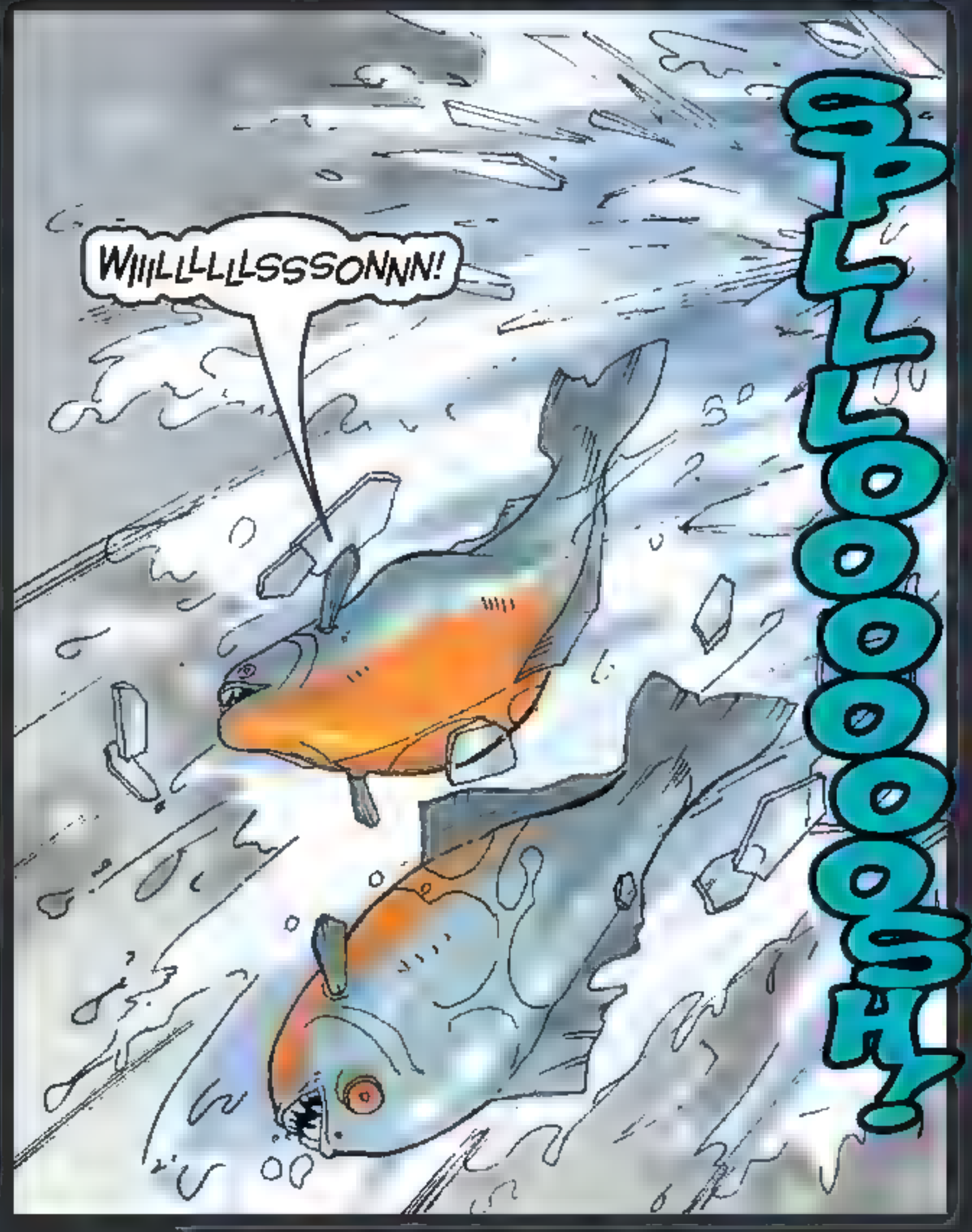
On today's bill of fare, the chef has prepared for you, *le doofe grande dans ball plastique!*

Eat up, my finny friends!



sniff He was so young. Also, small. He was too *young* and *small* to die! Ugly, too! He was too small, ugly, young, ugly and small to die!

And now, to *baking*. Hope I have enough nutmeg.



WIIIIIISSSSONNN!

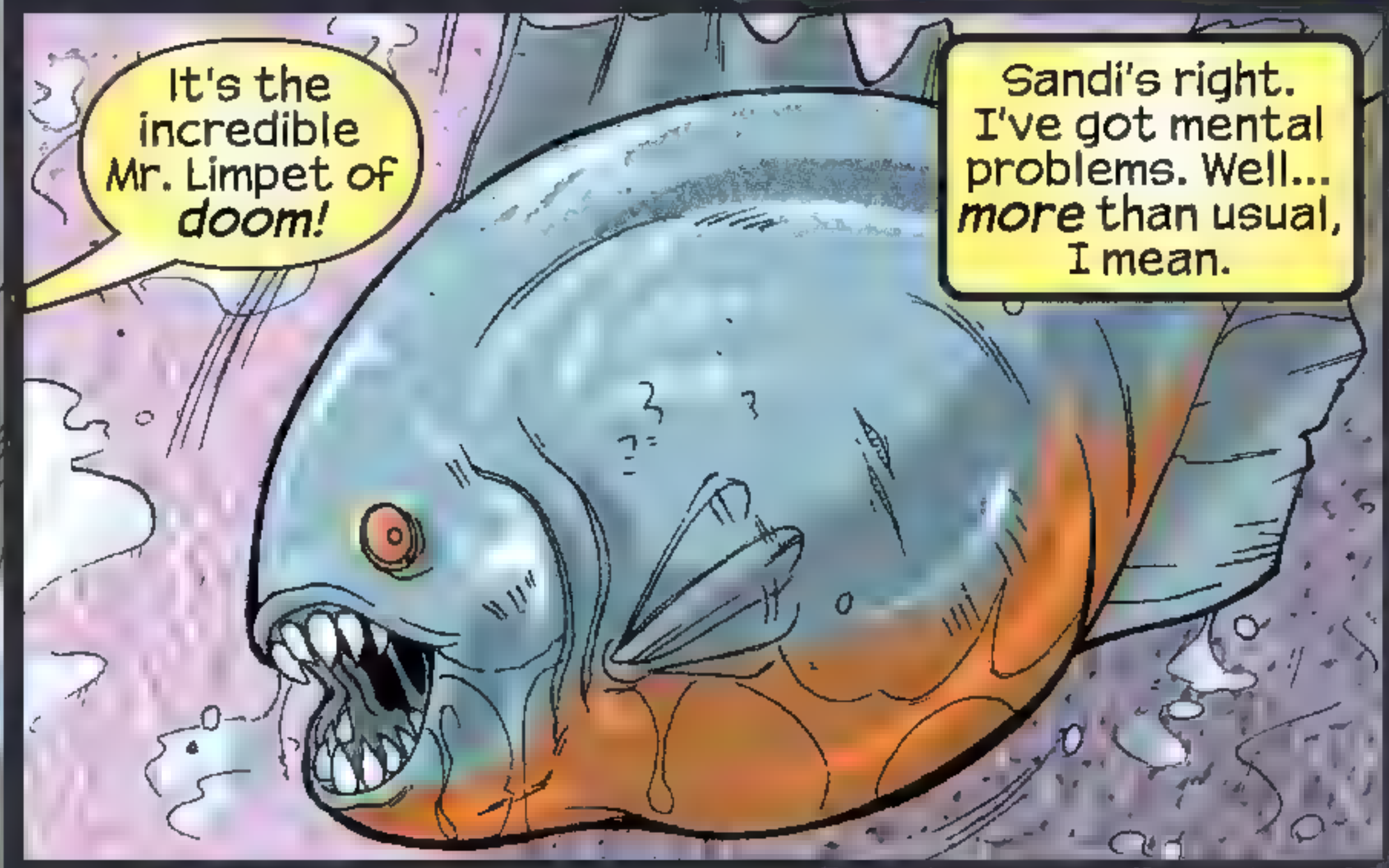
WIIIIIISSSSONNN!



Ack! The devil has been living in *my* aquarium!

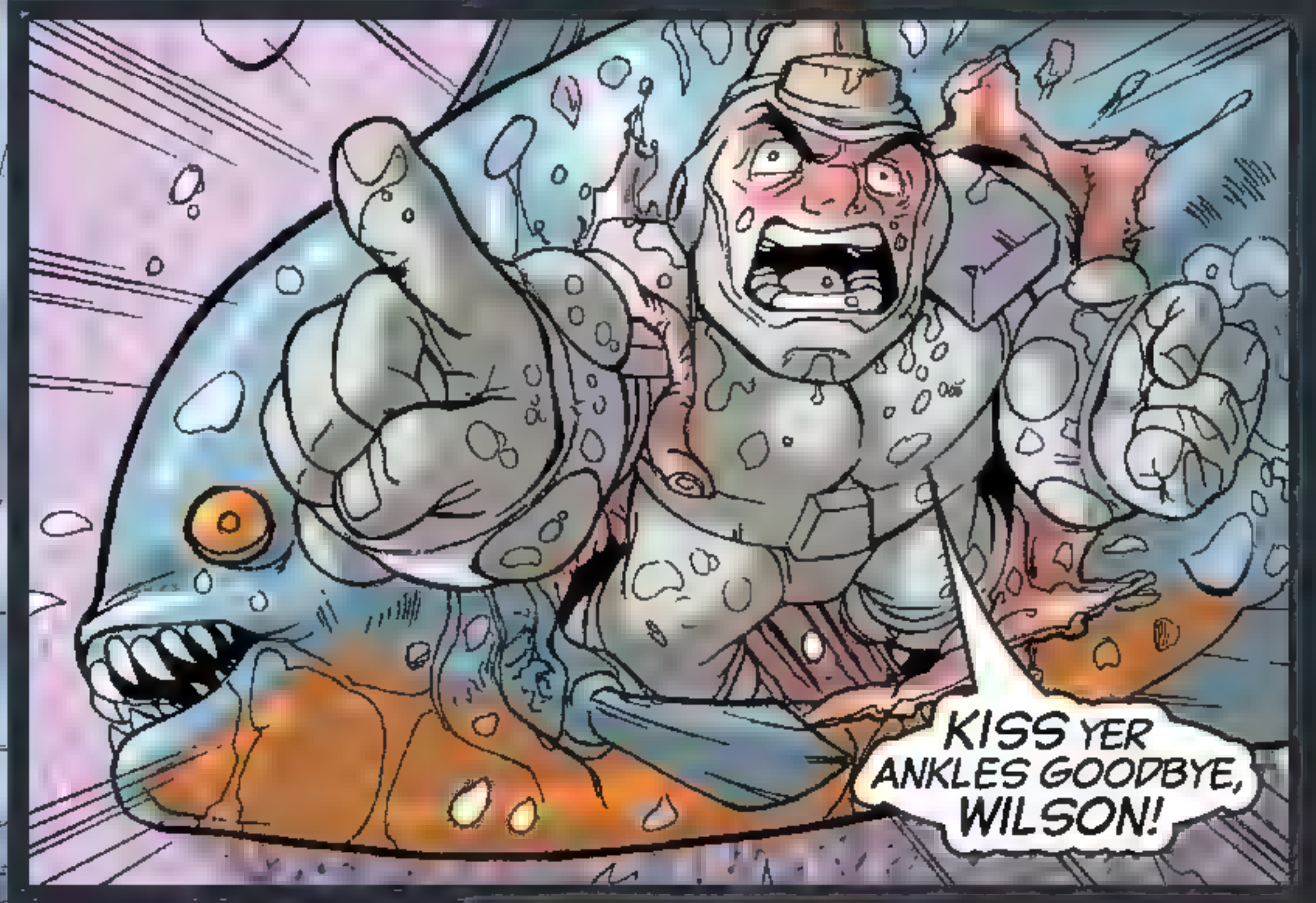
WIIIIIISSSSONNN!

I'm *sorry* I ate so many of your delicious friends in beer batter with cocktail sauce, Mr. Devil Fish!

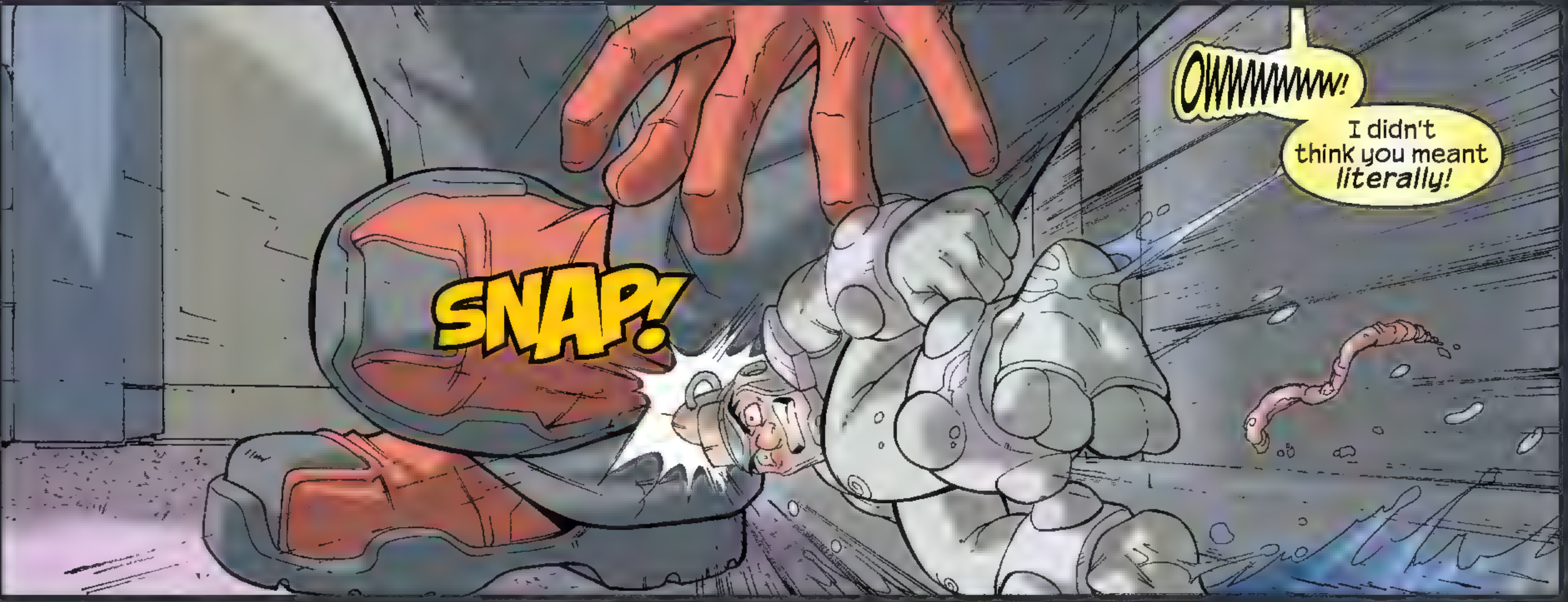


It's the incredible Mr. Limpet of doom!

Sandi's right. I've got mental problems. Well... *more* than usual, I mean.



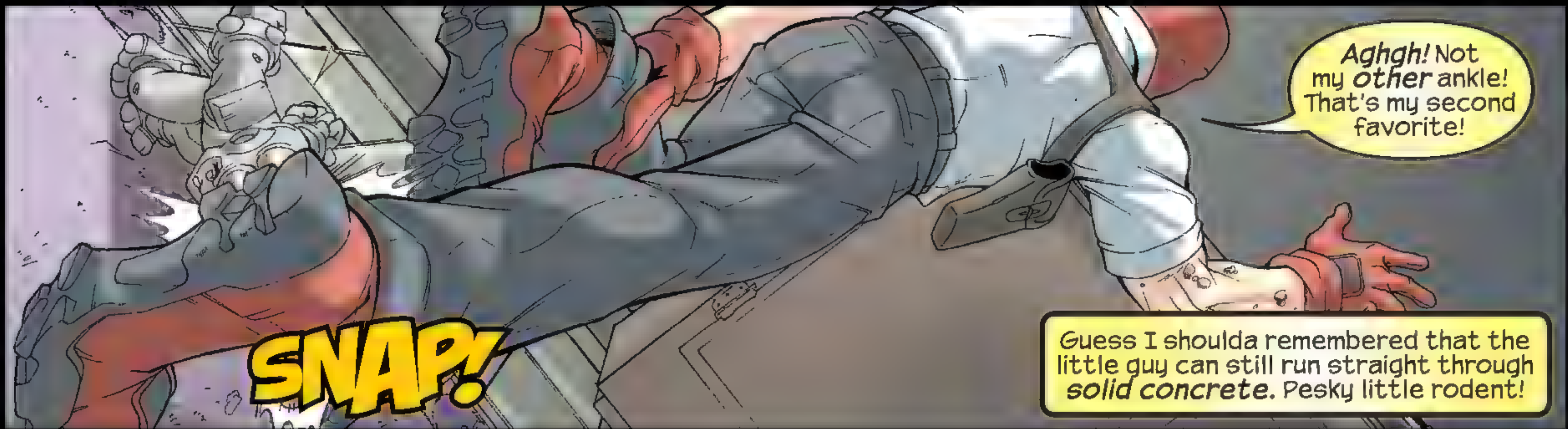
KISS YER ANKLES GOODBYE, WILSON!



OWWWWWWW!

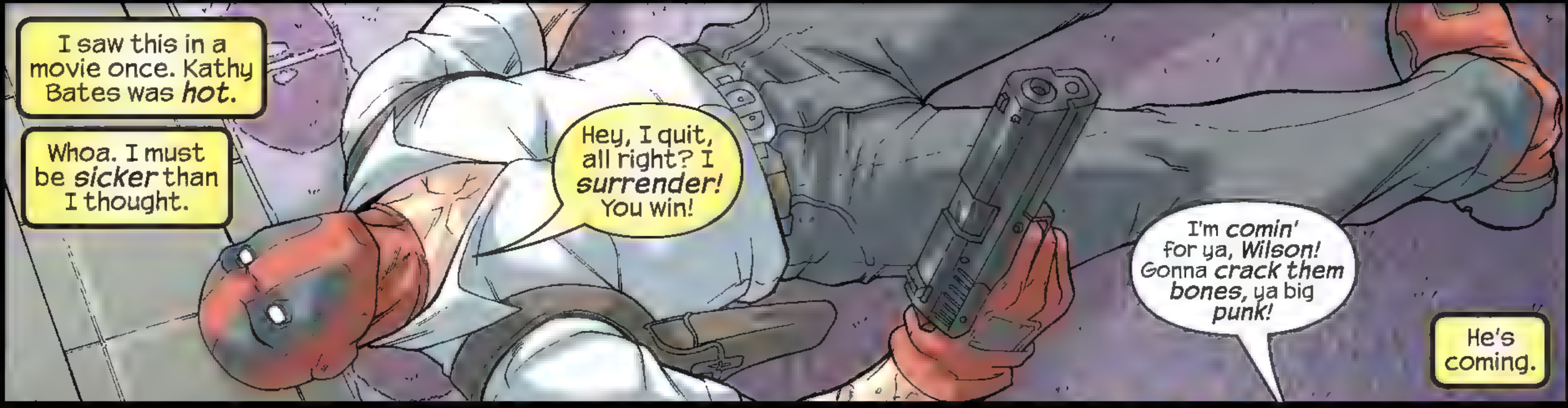
I didn't think you meant *literally*!

SNAP!



SNAP!

Guess I shoulda remembered that the little guy can still run straight through *solid concrete*. Pesky little rodent!



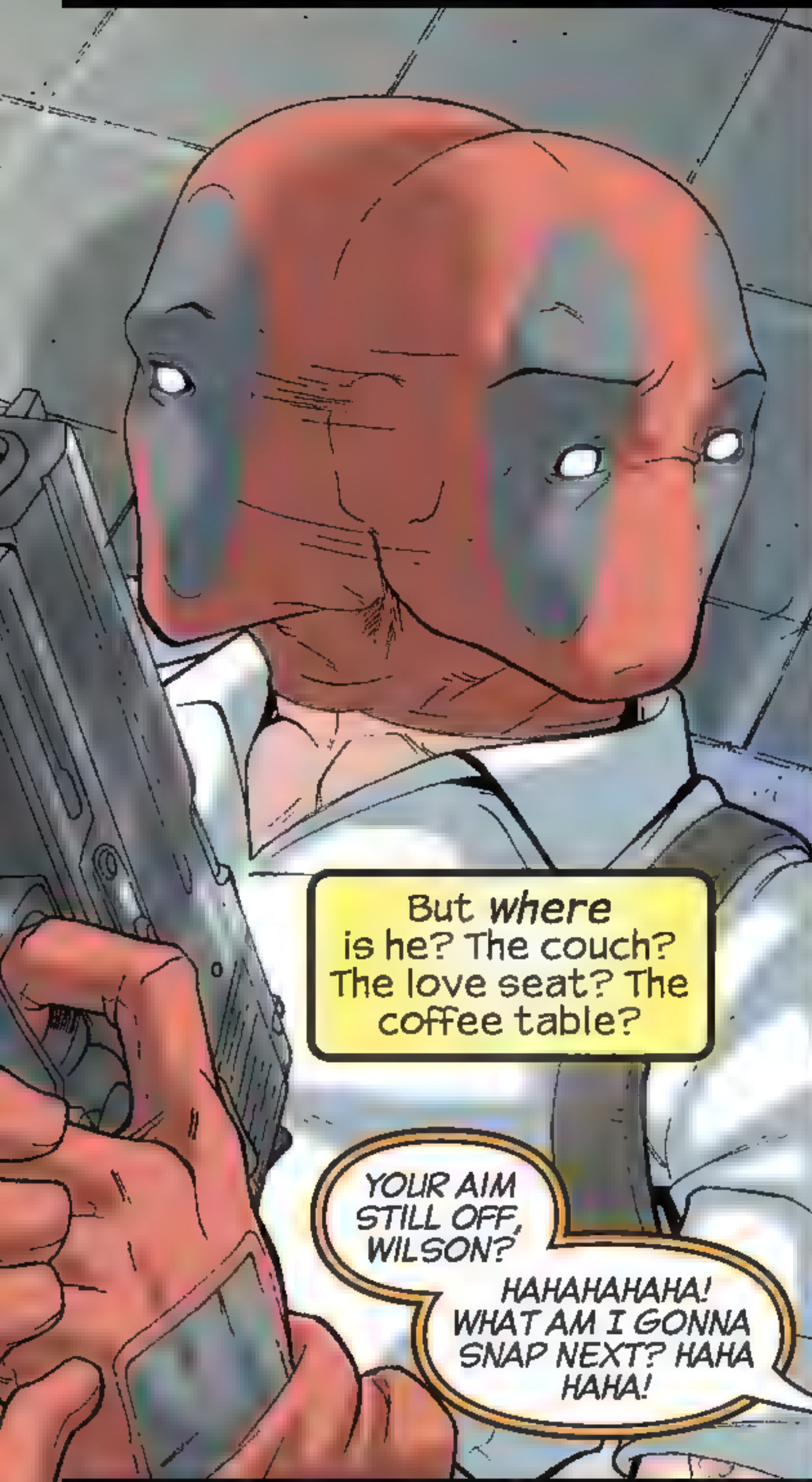
I saw this in a movie once. Kathy Bates was *hot*.

Whoa. I must be *sicker* than I thought.

Hey, I quit, all right? I *surrender!* You win!

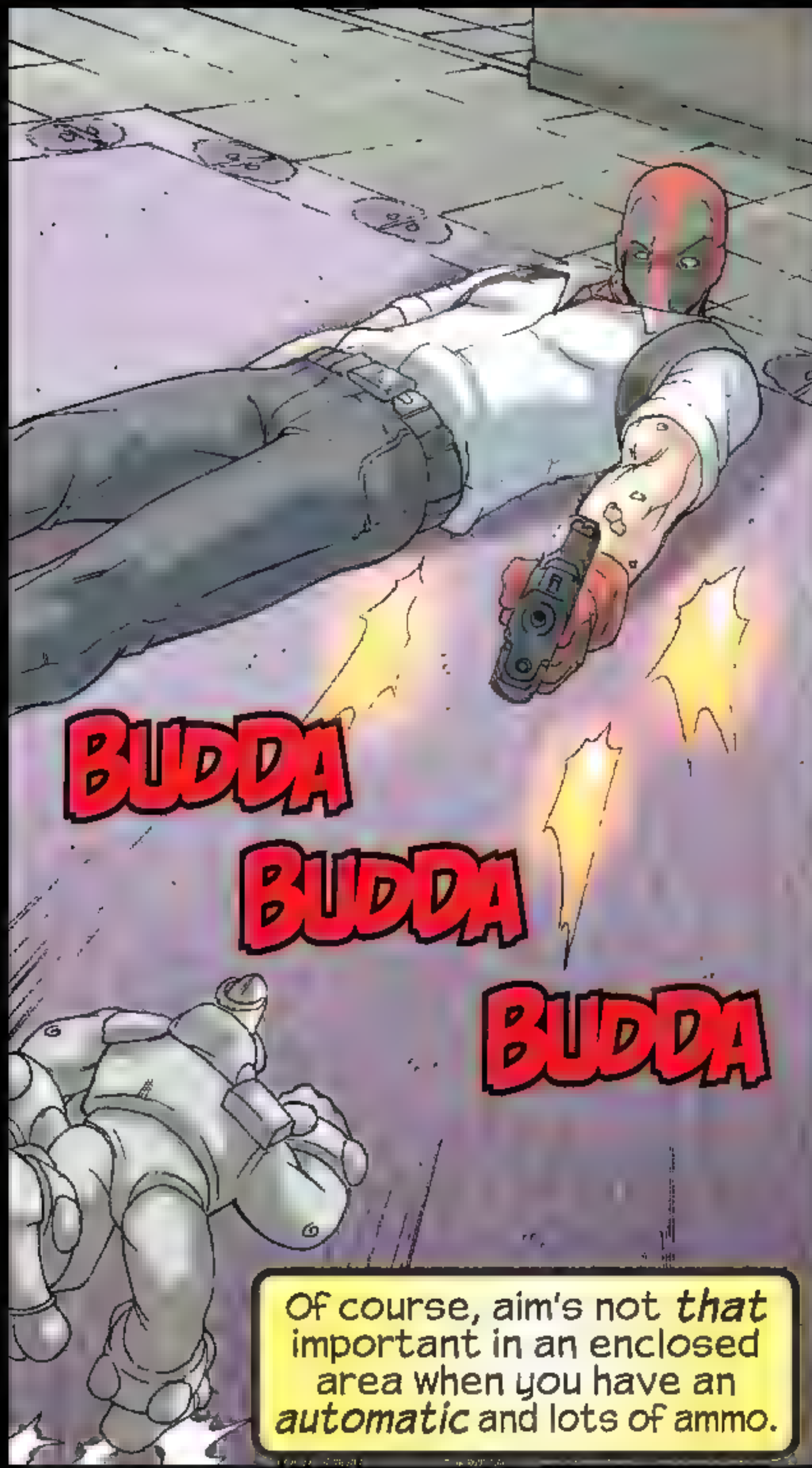
I'm *comin'* for ya, Wilson! Gonna *crack* them bones, ya big punk!

He's coming.



But *where* is he? The couch? The love seat? The coffee table?

YOUR AIM STILL OFF, WILSON?
HAHAHAHAHA! WHAT AM I GONNA SNAP NEXT? HAHA HAHA!

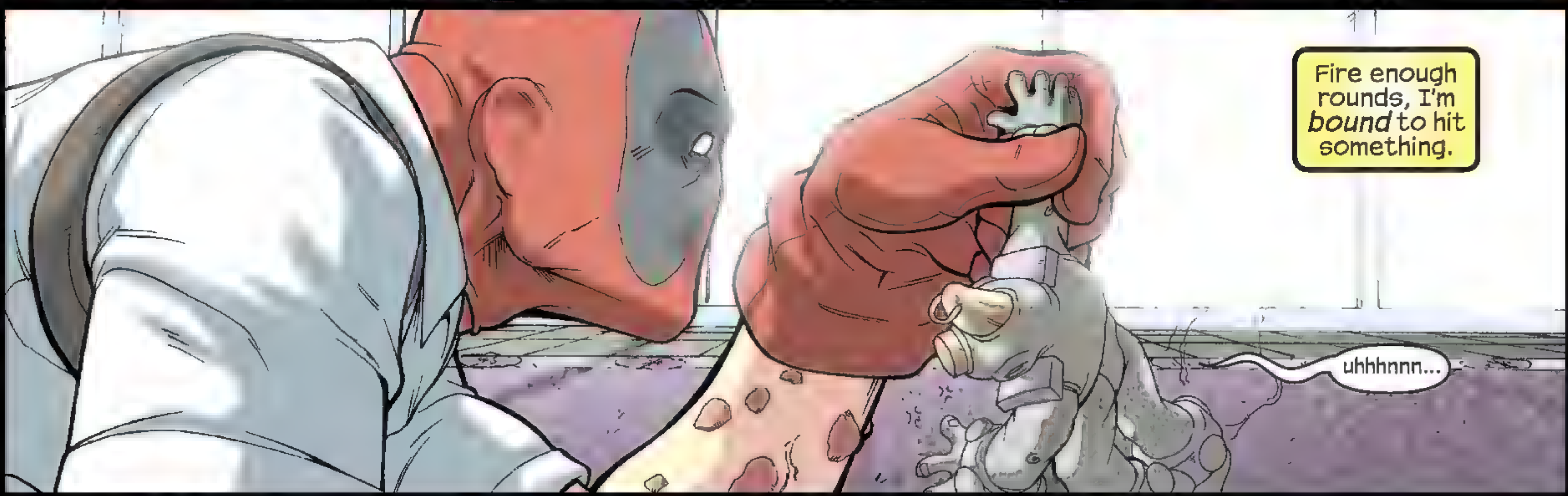


**BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA**

Of course, aim's not *that* important in an enclosed area when you have an *automatic* and lots of ammo.



Uh, oh.



Fire enough rounds, I'm *bound* to hit something.

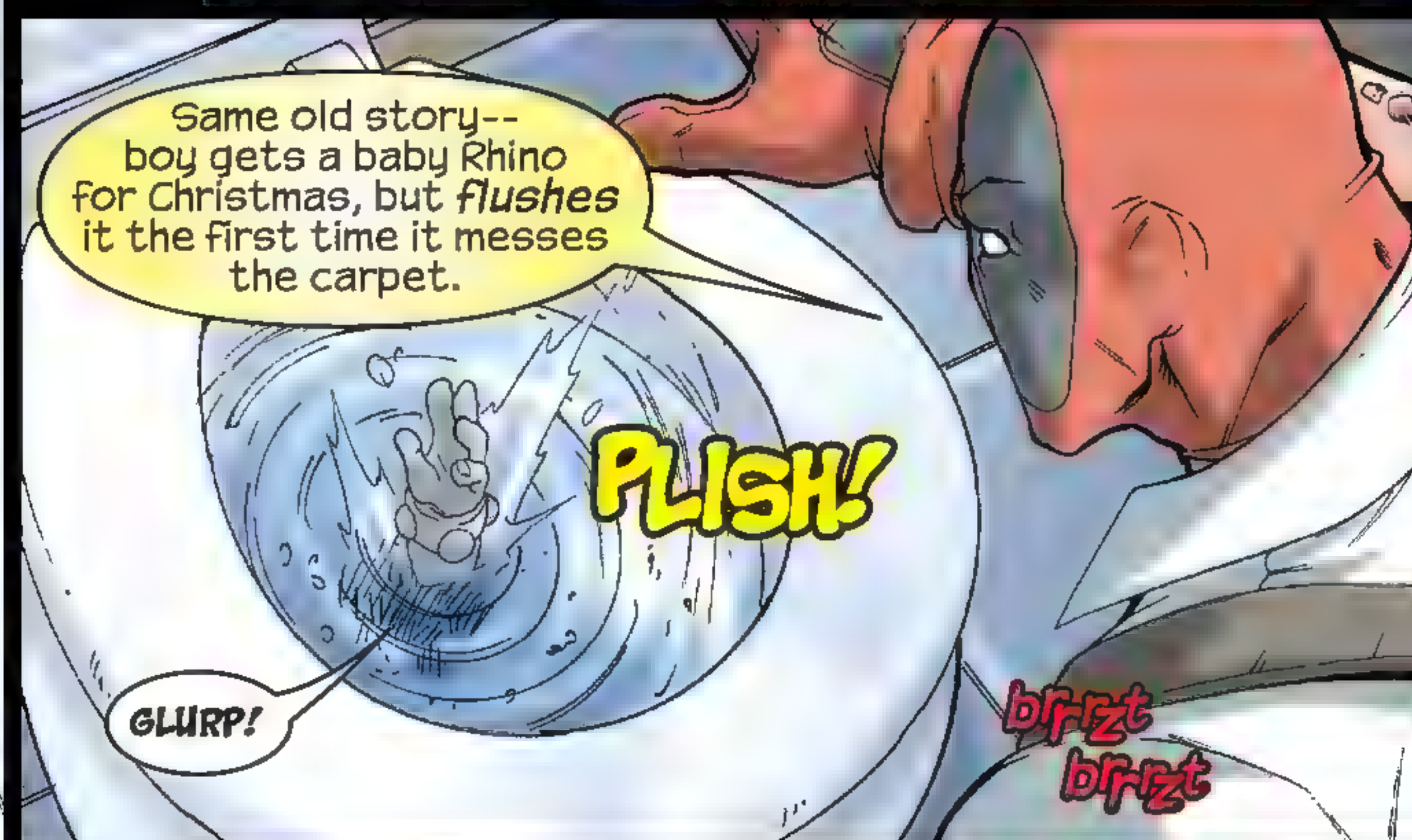
uhhhnnn...



I'm afraid I have some *bad* news, Rhino.

We're no longer buddies.

Wha... Wade! No!



Same old story-- boy gets a baby Rhino for Christmas, but *flushes* it the first time it messes the carpet.

PLISH!

GLURP!

brzt brzt



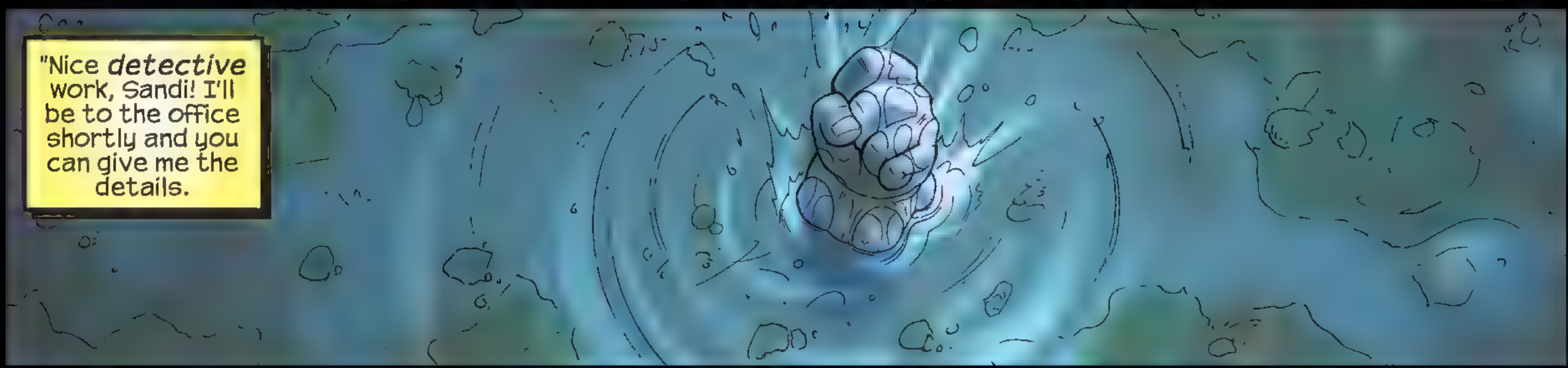
Oh, hi, Sandi. How are you?

FLORP!

I'm fine, except that *I'm* in the bathroom and my *ankles* are still in the living room.



"So to get the guy that messed with my brain, I have to go to *Germany*?"



"Nice *detective* work, Sandi! I'll be to the office shortly and you can give me the details."



"Give me a minute to shower. It's been a long day... and honestly, I just *reek*."

WILLSSSONNN!

Marvel Comics would like to assure the readers that no animals were harmed during the making of this comic... except a snake, some fish, and a guy in a Rhino-shaped jumpsuit.
--The Management

NEXT ISSUE: TASKMASTER!

MARVEL[®] COMICS

DEADPOOL[®]

MARVEL

68

**SIMONE
TSANG
UDON**





Will one
of you...

...Please...

...hurry
up...

...and pull the
trigger?



Look.
I'll...

...make it
easy.

I'm a...
little tea-
pot--

He's
gettin'
up...



-- Short
and red.

Wish I'd
stayed at
home in
bed...

When I
ask for a
hail of
lead...

Watch
it!

He's
going for
the gun!



Just pull
the trigger
and --

Shoot.

My.

Head.

Wh...
what?



Man, I
don't want
to shoot no
crazy
guy -- !

Let
go!

Pull
it!



Eight hours ago.

Good
beer.

Bad
company.

Last time I faced this guy, the "*Taskmaster*," as he
likes to be known, we were trying to *kill* each other
to the death. Now he's got information I *need*.

Like why my *brain* is suddenly crippled. Like why I'm having
headaches so bad they make *decapitation* seem like a
reasonable therapy. And one other thing...

He's given
me a *name*.

So, this
guy you told
Sandi
about--

Yeah. The
"Black Swan."
Don't have a
real ID.

--You think
he sneezed some
kinda *virus* in my
brain?

HEALING FACTOR: HEADBANGER'S BALL

CHAPTER THREE

Story by
Gail Simone

Art by UDON with Arnold Tsang, Andrew Hou,
Eric Vedder, Omar Dogan & TheRealIT!

UDON Asst. Chief
Rhys Yorke

UDON Chief
Erik Ko

Letters by
Dave Sharpe

Assisted by
Yoshii & Raicht

Edited by
Lis & Marts

Chief
Joe Quesada

President
Bill Jemas

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Sounds like.

Any idea why?

Well, to be fair, I barely *know* you and I want to kill you *myself*.

Save me some peanuts, you big hog.



You're still mad I beat the crap out of you.

Nah. I watch, I learn.

Liar, He hasn't forgotten...



It's probably too late to do any good, but I'm gonna tell you this anyway. I *worked* with the Swan once.

Once was enough for me.



You heard of a merc named Tyrell Farsa?

Sure. Big guy, Canadian, right? Used to...

Crush skulls with his hands. Yeah. That's him.



He once took a hit on a prize thoroughbred--a quarter horse--for the insurance money.

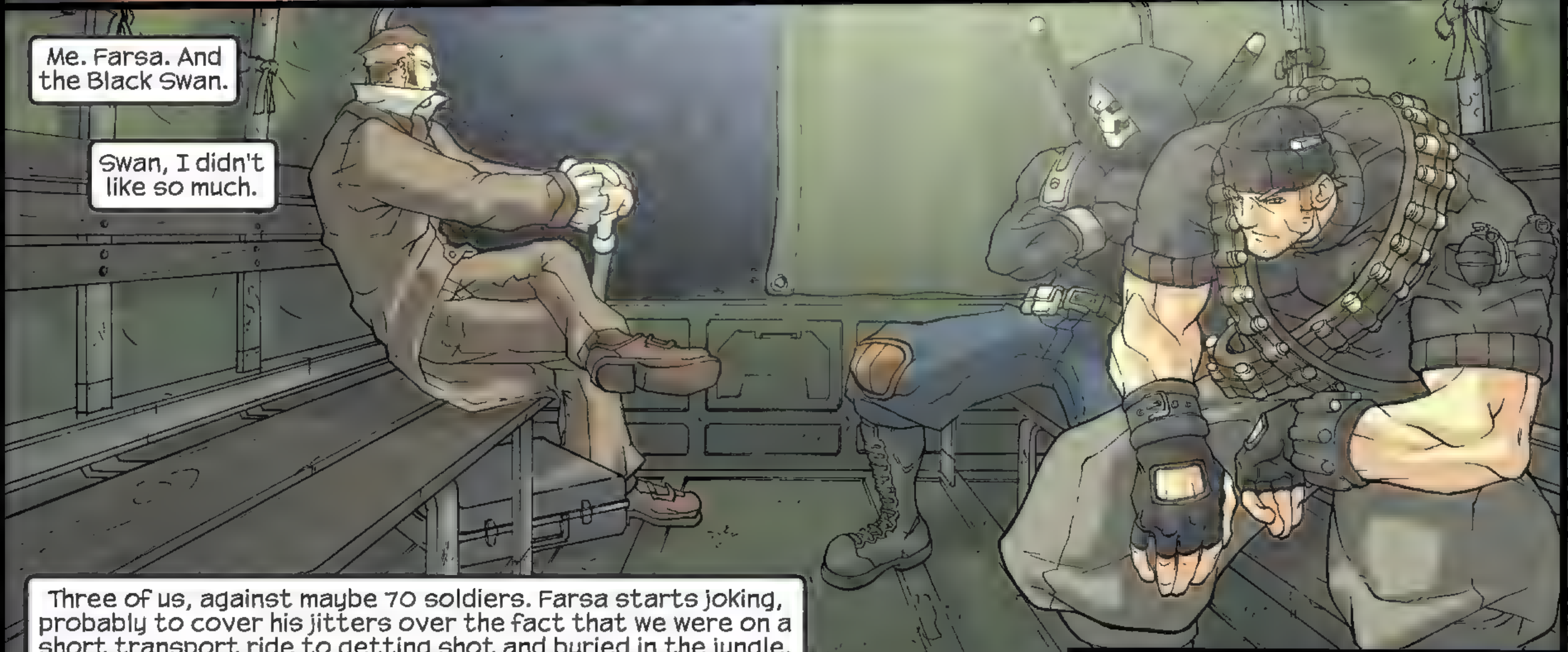
Did the job with his fists.

We got along fine right away.



I ain't gonna say what country, but there was a pop-up coup, and the new militia du jour made their bunker out of what used to be the local airport. Made sense; good communications equipment, security towers, barbed wire all around--

--not to mention control of the only airstrips in the region. The locals tried to fight...but in the end, they pooled their money and hired us to clean house.



Me. Farsa. And the Black Swan.

Swan, I didn't like so much.

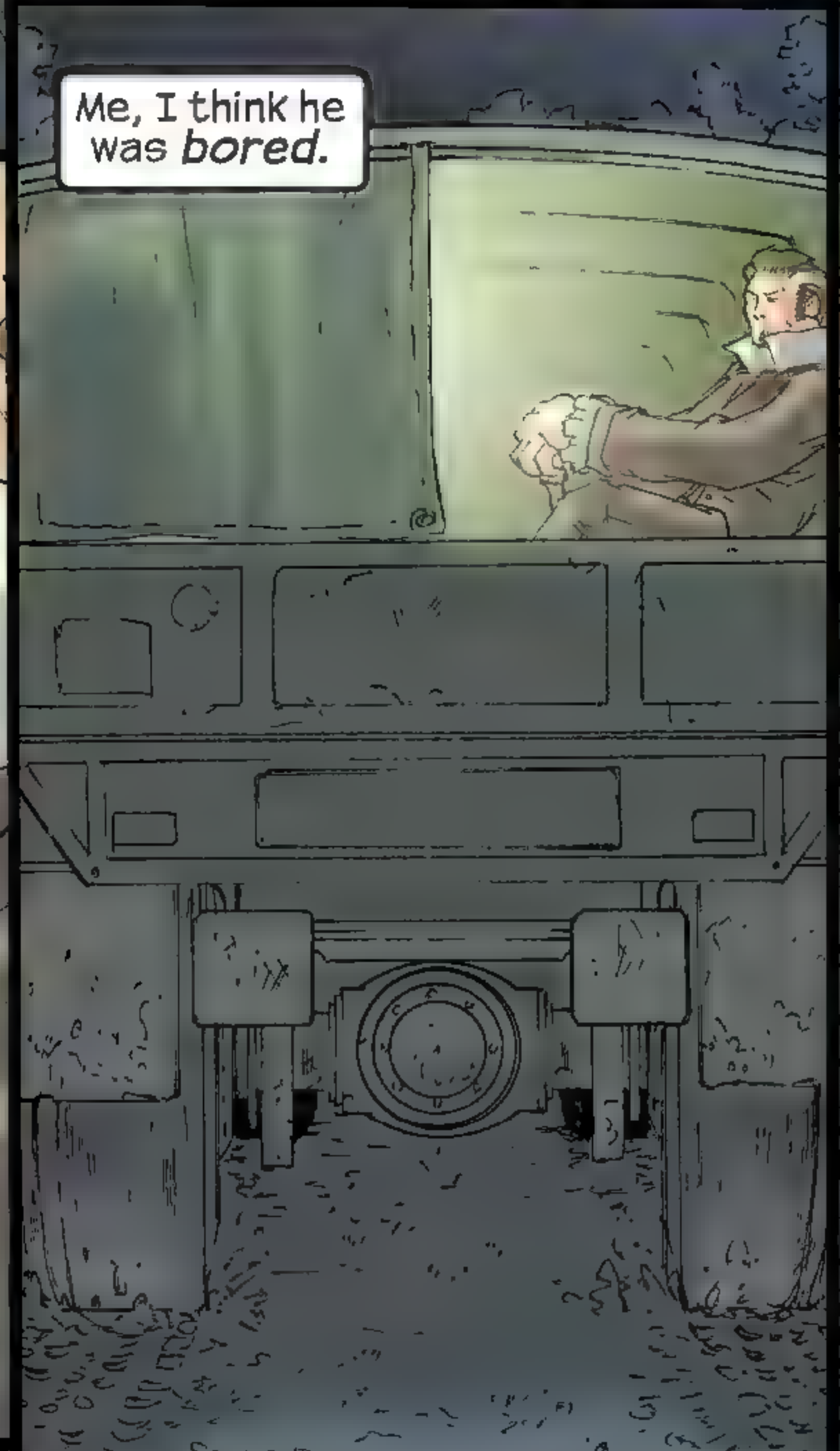
Three of us, against maybe 70 soldiers. Farsa starts joking, probably to cover his jitters over the fact that we were on a short transport ride to getting shot and buried in the jungle.



You know, when we get paid, I think I'm gonna rent a limo and take pretty boy there to the prom.

Hey, what's in the case, sweetie-pie?

I think Farsa believed the Swan was too scared to sass him back.



Me, I think he was *bored*.



We earned our pay.

And surprisingly, lived to collect.



We made it back to the departure point before the Swan -- still on a combat high, like two stupid, happy drunks.

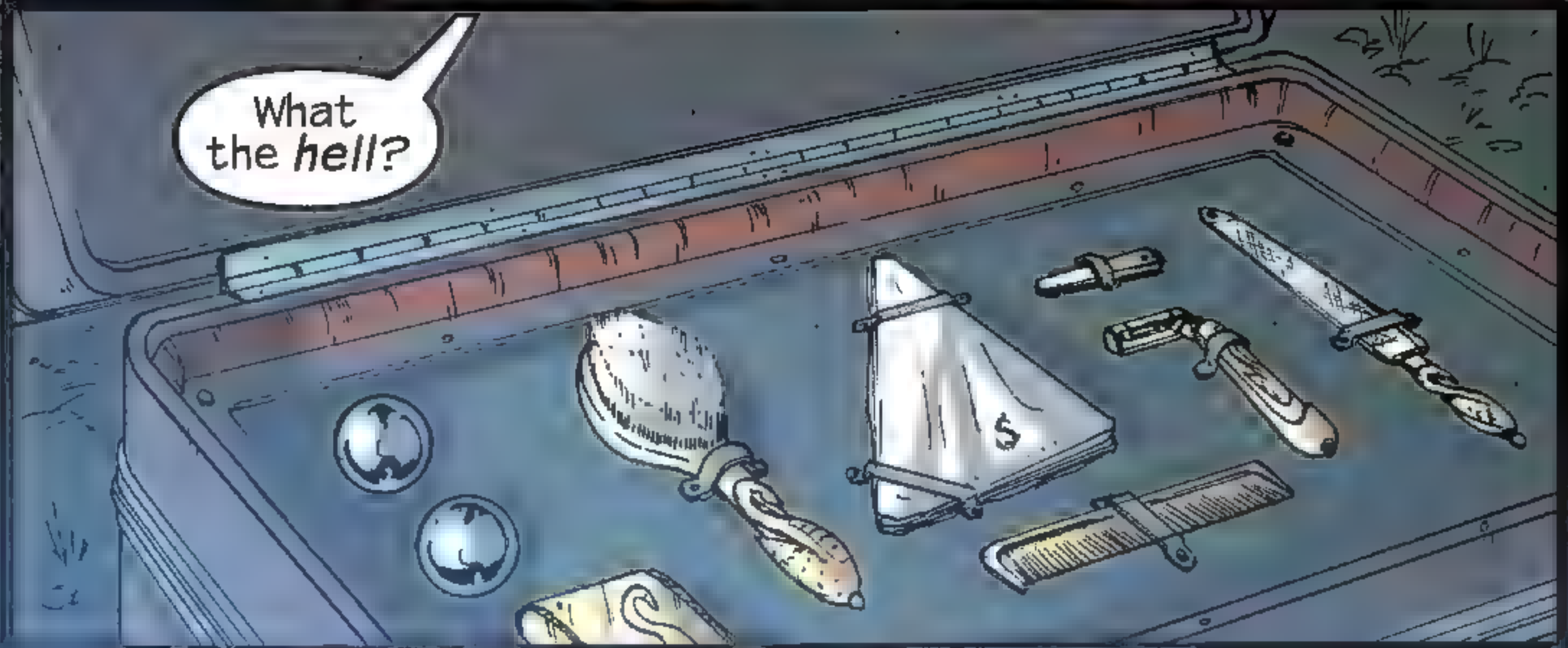
Let's see what's in the Sparrow's precious little case, eh? Keep an eye out.

I'd heard the Swan was bad news. I knew Farsa was underestimating him.



I figured it was gonna be guns, or interrogation tools. I never figured on...

Silk hankies?



What the hell?



Of course, that's when he came back.

Please cease your clumsy rummaging through my property at once.



Oh, sure, "Swan." Whatever you say, man.

I guess maybe Farsa wasn't used to anyone standing up to him. I could see what he was thinking of doing, the poor, dumb sap...



Here you are, cutie.



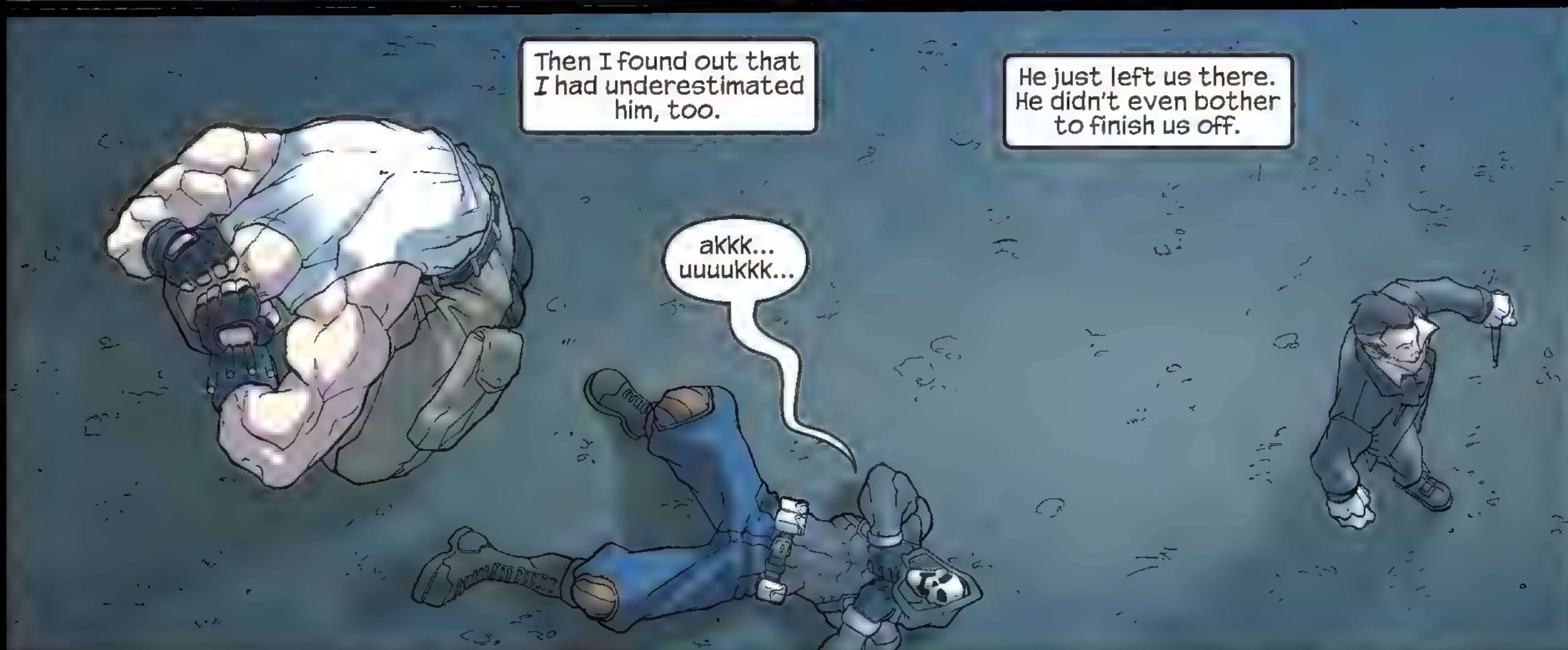
The Swan did something to Farsa.

Some really ugly mental assault. It made the air around them hot.



I figured, what the hell, I owed it to Farsa to stop the Swan. Professional courtesy, right?

UrIk...

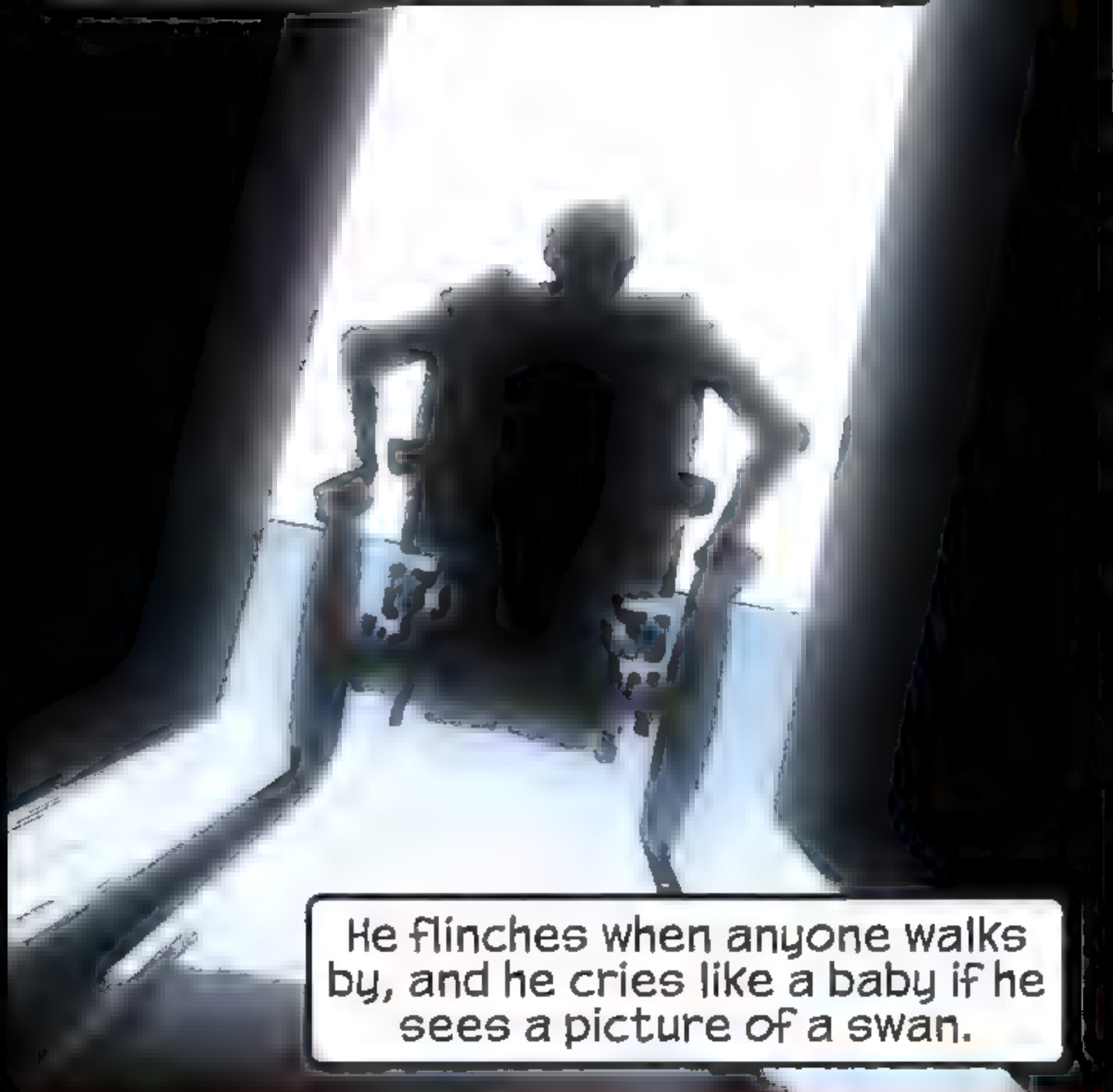


Then I found out that I had underestimated him, too.

He just left us there. He didn't even bother to finish us off.

akkk...
uuuukkk...

I visited Farsa in the hospital a while ago. He still can't feed himself, or go to the bathroom without help.



He flinches when anyone walks by, and he cries like a baby if he sees a picture of a swan.

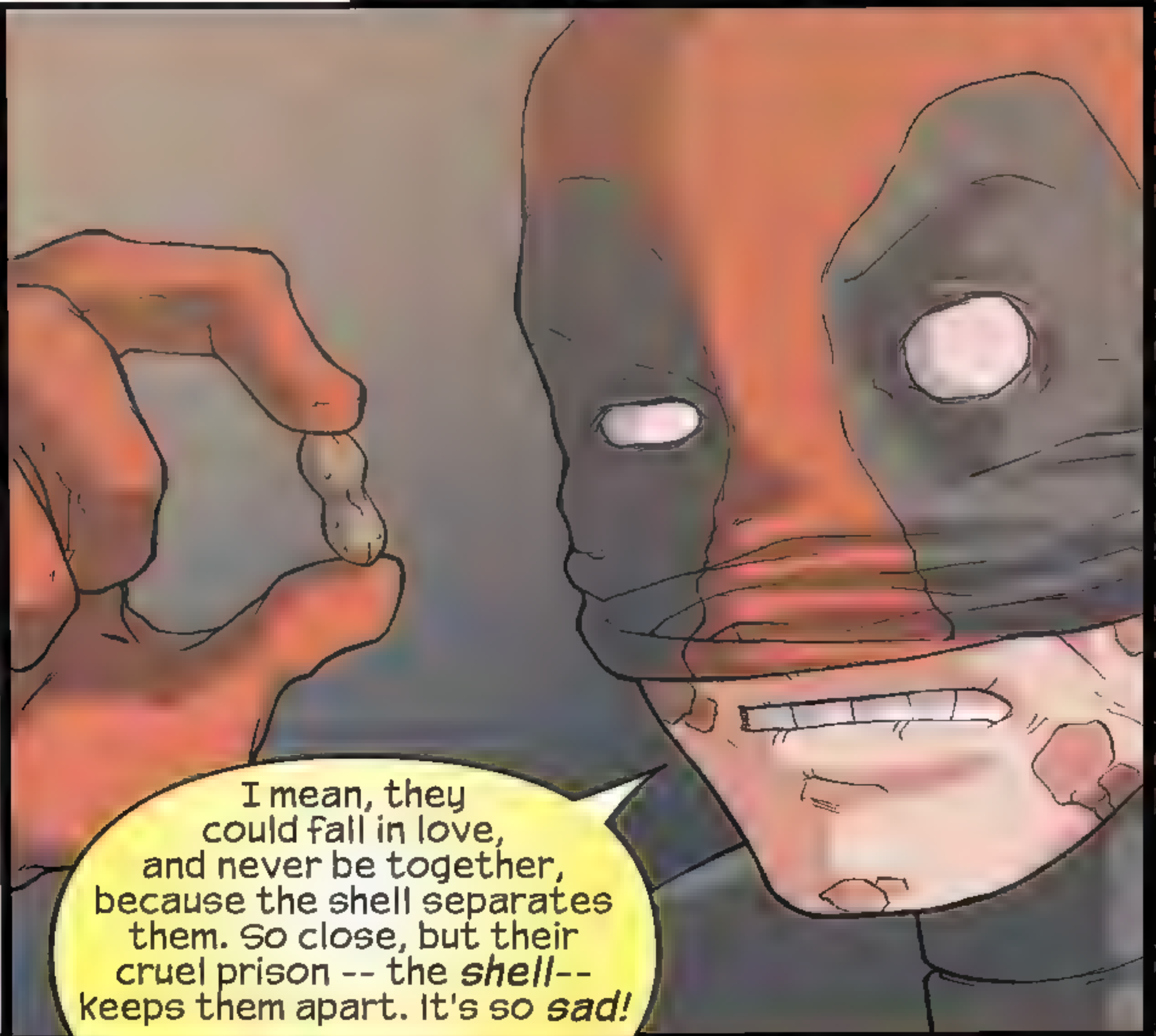
So you ask me why the Black Swan did this to you?



I think you were just like Farsa to him, Wilson. Just a bug on his windshield.



Did you ever think that, to the nuts inside, the peanut shell is like their whole universe?



I mean, they could fall in love, and never be together, because the shell separates them. So close, but their cruel prison -- the *shell*-- keeps them apart. It's so *sad*!



How they must *hate* their cruel, cruel master, *The Shell*--

...uncaring despoiler of legume romance!



HUG

KISS

SMOOCH

TOUCH

SQUEEZE

And then, one day, they're *free*! And it's like, "let's *dance*, you hot salty nut!"



Nut porn is what it is. Disgusting.

FONDL
GROPE

Nice to see success hasn't changed you, Wilson.



I'm outta here. But listen...

You plan on making a move on the Swan--



--I'll go with ya, if you want.

No charge.



That's...

...that's cool of you, man. But I got one last gig to do, and then I think I should clean this guy out alone.



Suit yourself. But I wasn't gonna do it for *you*.

With you dead, Sandi'd be out of a *job*.

That's you-- the killer who cares.



Sandi. Without her running the place, Deadpool, Inc. would go down the porcelain subway in about *five minutes*. But something's *up* with her, and she's made it clear she won't *talk* to me about it.

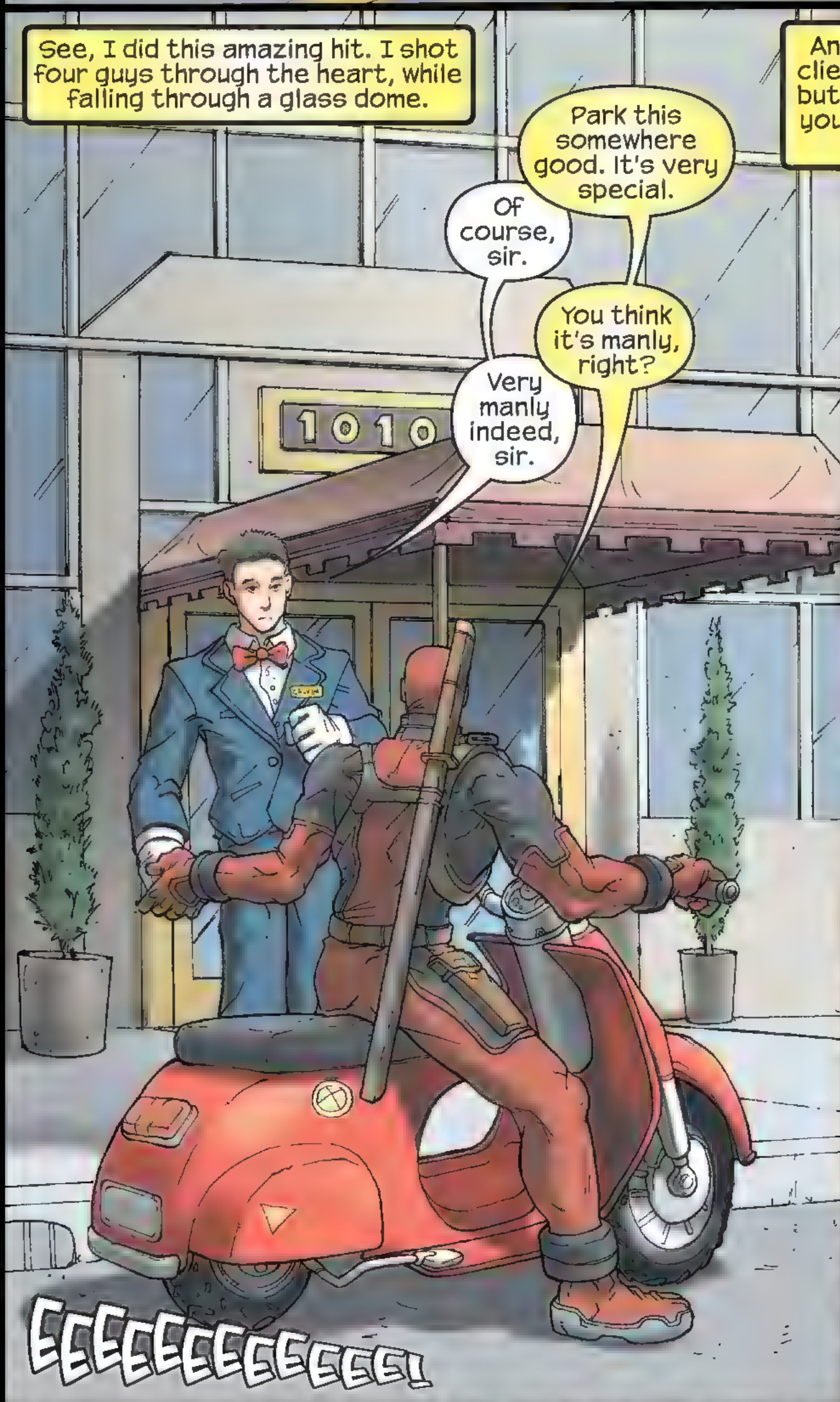
Nice scooter, freak!

It's a motorbike!

It's 100% manly!

Stupid Rhino smashing my stupid car!

REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!



See, I did this amazing hit. I shot four guys through the heart, while falling through a glass dome.

Park this somewhere good. It's very special.

Of course, sir.

You think it's manly, right?

Very manly indeed, sir.

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

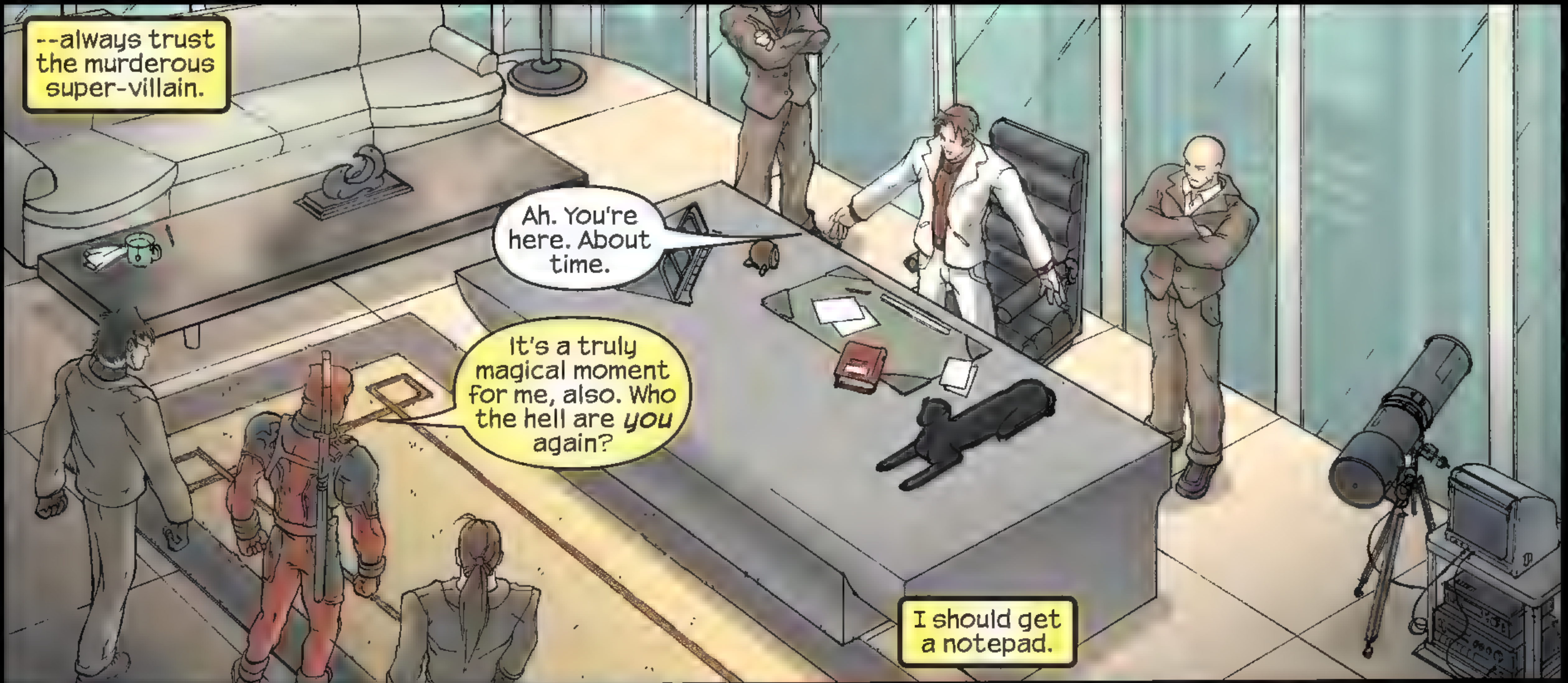


And ever since then, my clients have been nothing but rich businessmen. And you know what I'm coming to understand?

Mr. Montgomery has asked us to welcome you, sir. Will you follow us, please?

Sure. Hey, you guys ever mix peanuts and cashews? And film it?

That if you have a choice between trusting a businessman or trusting a murderous super-villain--



--always trust the murderous super-villain.

Ah. You're here. About time.

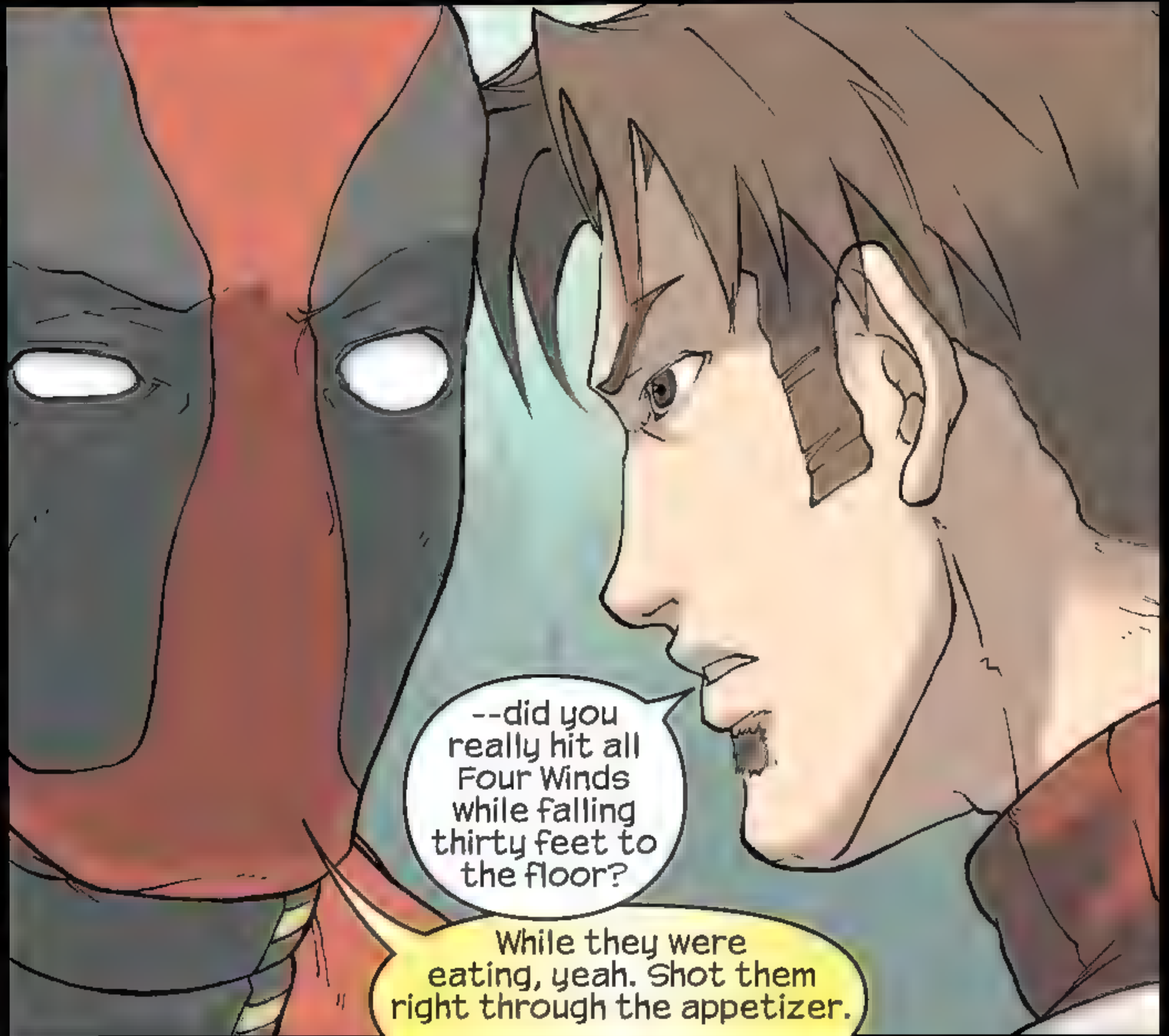
It's a truly magical moment for me, also. Who the hell are *you* again?

I should get a notepad.



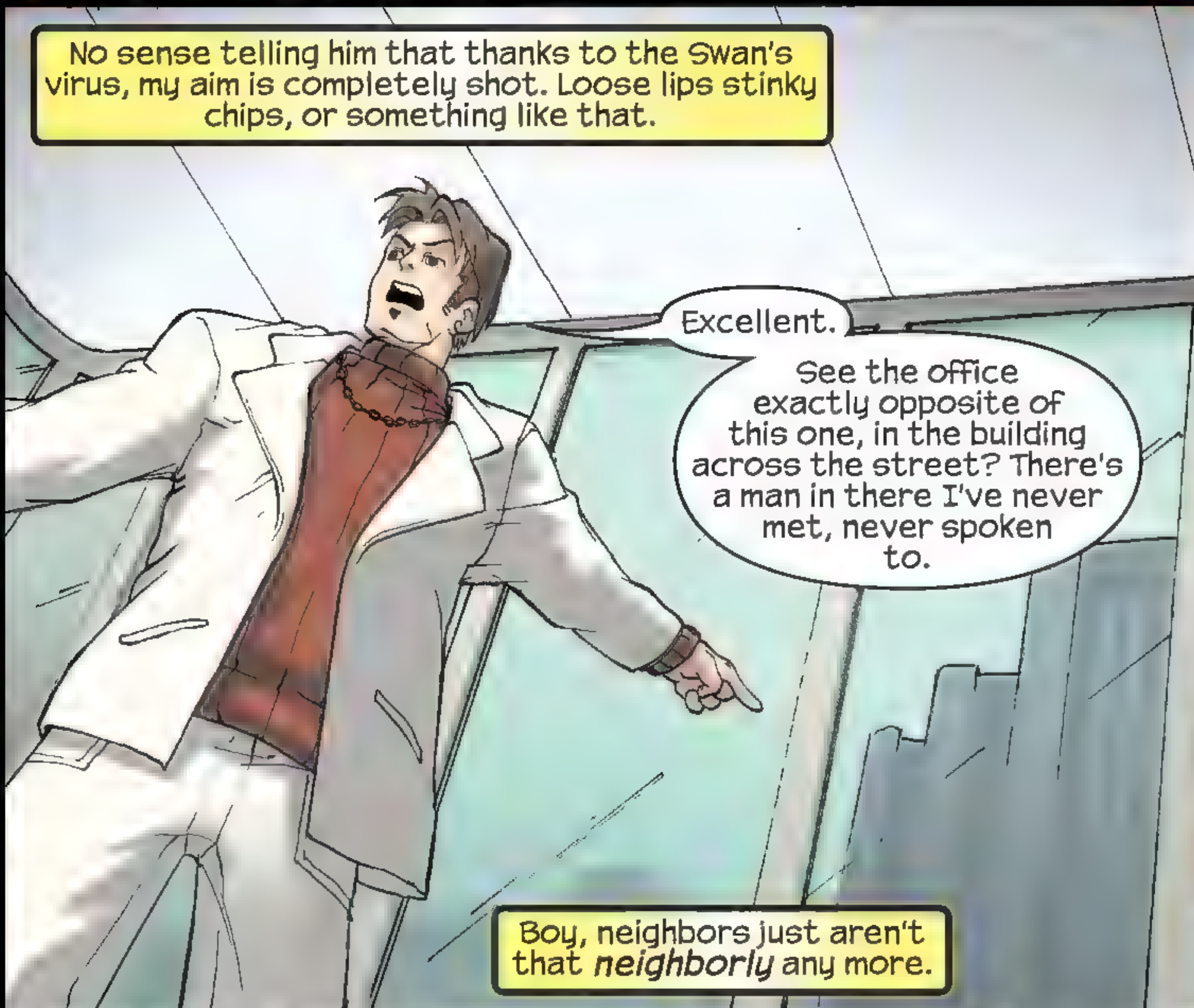
C.L. Montgomery, Mr. Deadpool. This is my building. Cruise Minor recommended your, er, confidential services.

But before we commit to this deal--



--did you really hit all Four Winds while falling thirty feet to the floor?

While they were eating, yeah. Shot them right through the appetizer.



No sense telling him that thanks to the Swan's virus, my aim is completely shot. Loose lips stinky chips, or something like that.

Excellent.

See the office exactly opposite of this one, in the building across the street? There's a man in there I've never met, never spoken to.

Boy, neighbors just aren't that *neighborly* any more.



I need you to take him out. He needs to stop existing. Next time I see his name, it needs to have "Rest In Peace" after it.

Slay thy neighbor, the forgotten commandment.

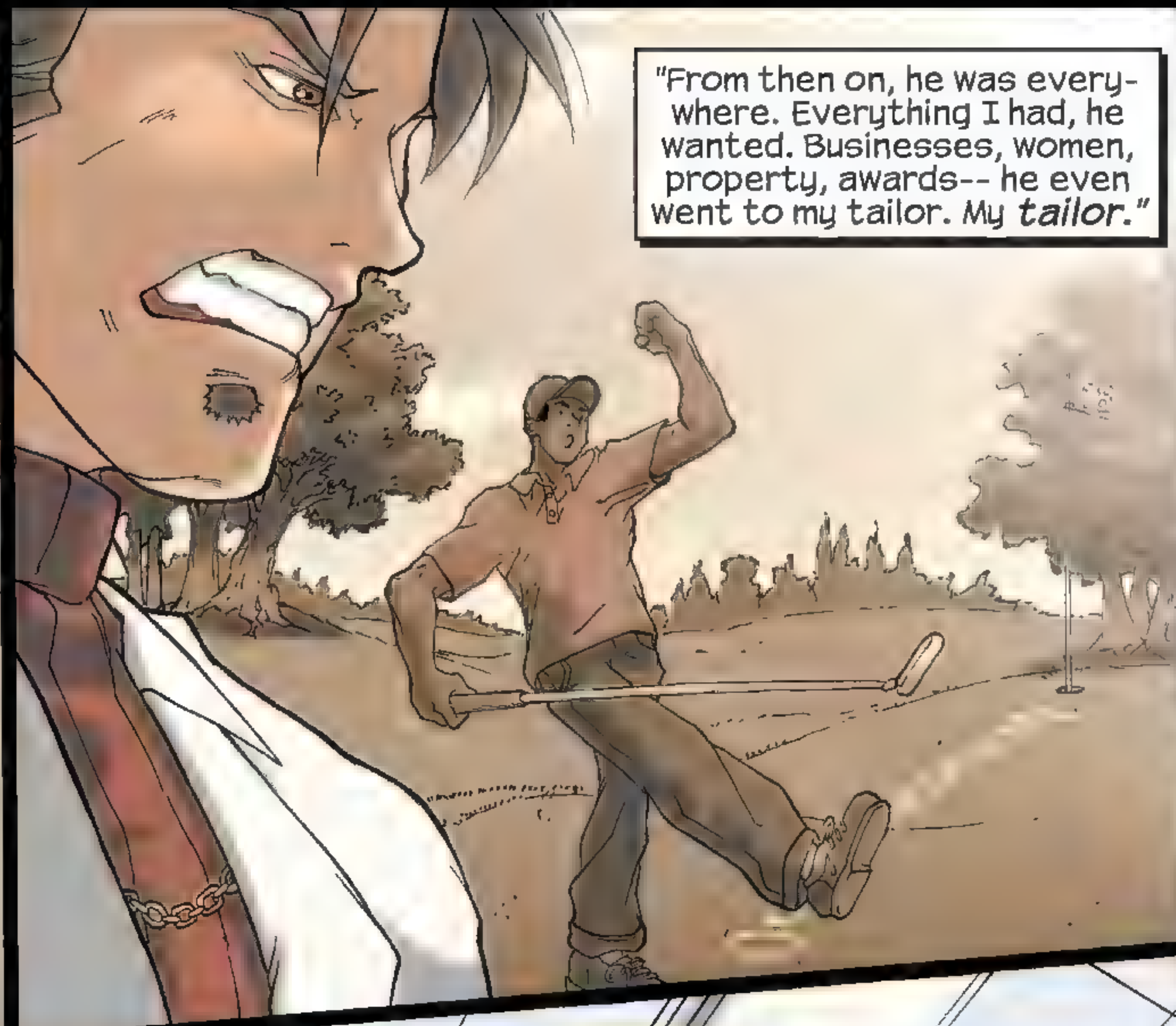


The guy's name is Curtis Boland. When I had my first company, he was in the mail room.

Business was bad, and I laid him off-- turned out to be his birthday, I guess. How was I to know?

Uh, huh. Uh, huh. Yep. I'm with you.

For the love of *god*, is there no *bathroom* in this suite?



"From then on, he was everywhere. Everything I had, he wanted. Businesses, women, property, awards-- he even went to my tailor. My *tailor*."



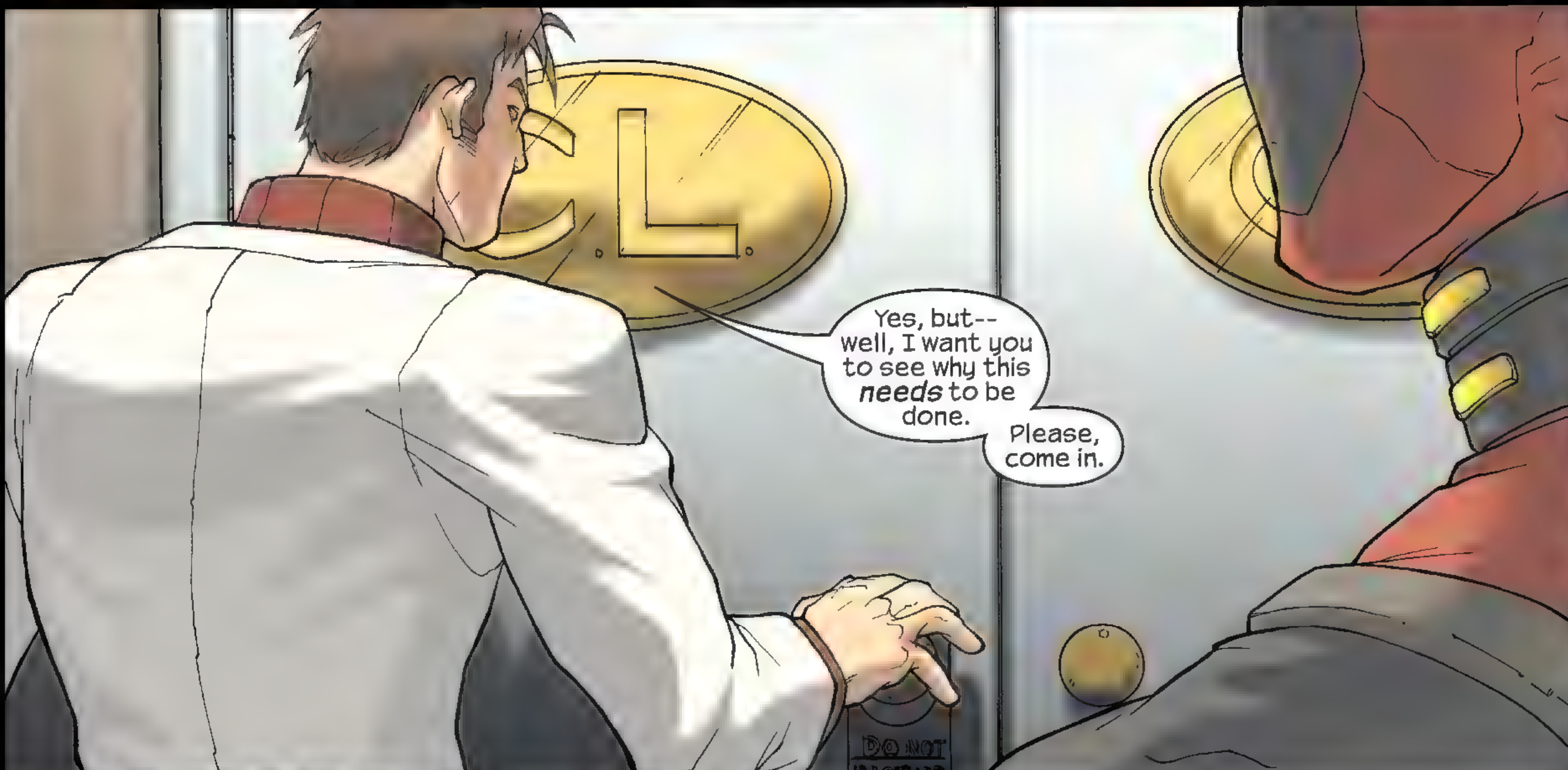
"He became my tireless 'arch-enemy,' as you masked types call it. When he got rich enough, he built the building across the street just to spoil my view."

"But he could never quite bloody me."



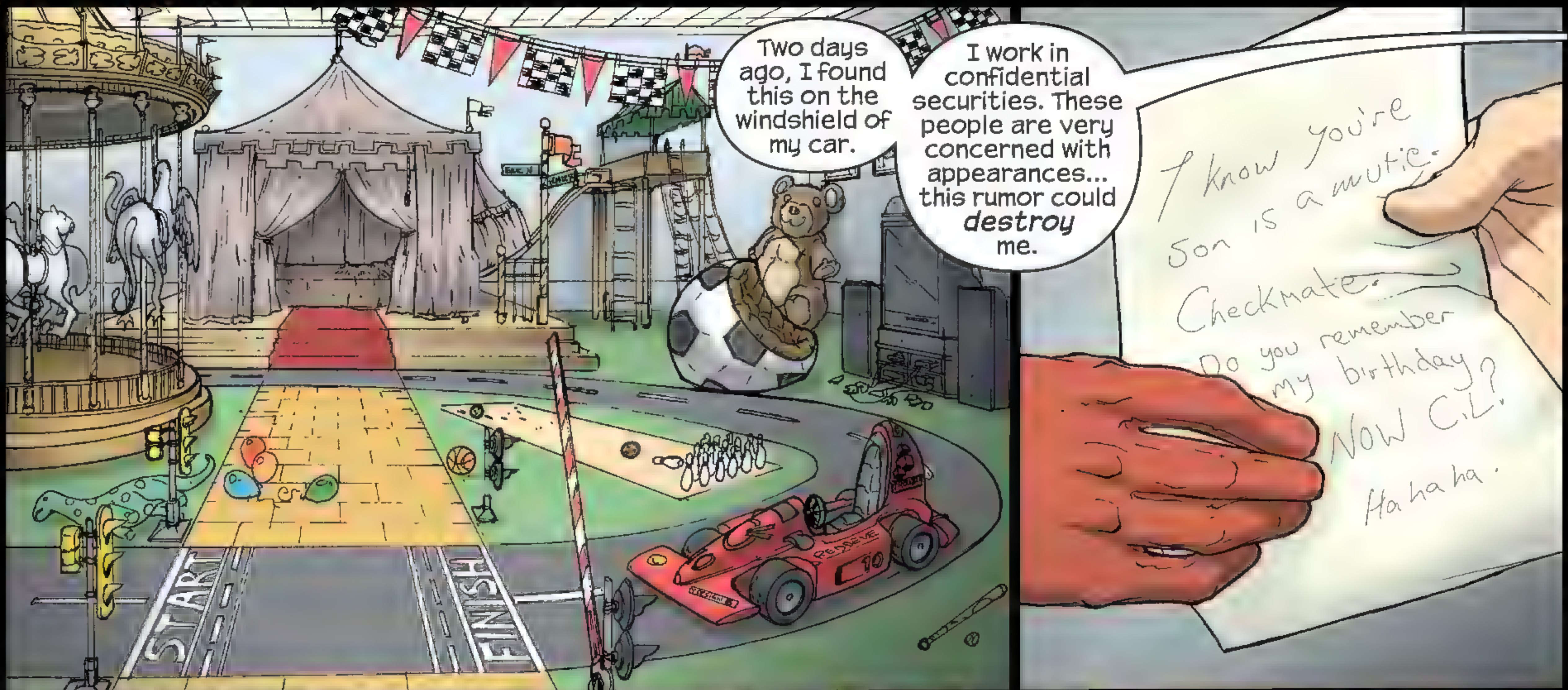
Listen, C.L.-- can I call you C.L.? No? Fine.

C.L., you don't need to tell me all this. I'm more of a point and click piece of software. You point, I click.



Yes, but-- well, I want you to see why this *needs* to be done.

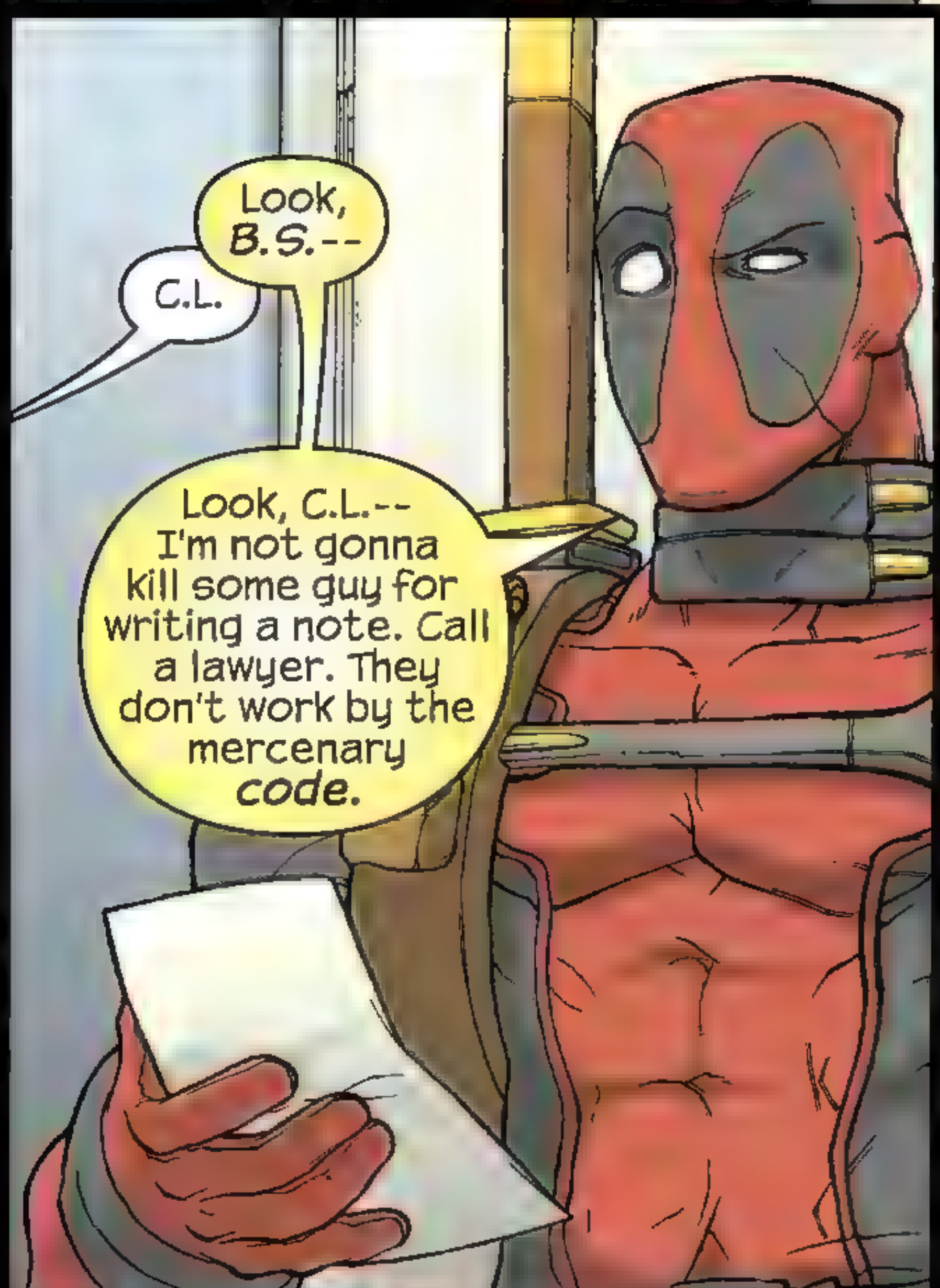
Please, come in.



Two days ago, I found this on the windshield of my car.

I work in confidential securities. These people are very concerned with appearances... this rumor could **destroy** me.

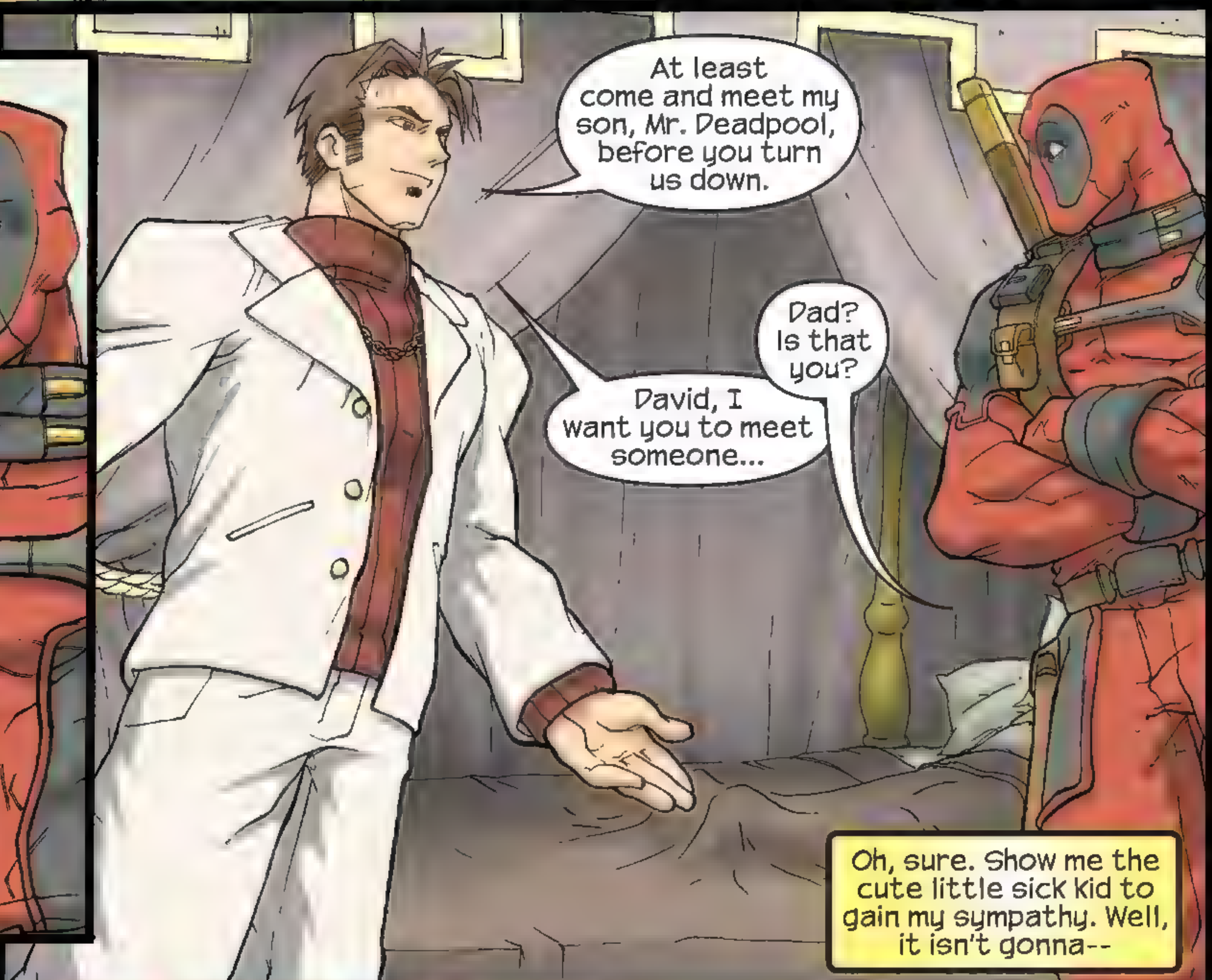
I know you're son is a mutie.
Checkmate.
Do you remember my birthday?
Now C.L.
Hahaha.



Look, B.S.--

C.L.

Look, C.L.-- I'm not gonna kill some guy for writing a note. Call a lawyer. They don't work by the mercenary code.



At least come and meet my son, Mr. Deadpool, before you turn us down.

Dad? Is that you?

David, I want you to meet someone...

Oh, sure. Show me the cute little sick kid to gain my sympathy. Well, it isn't gonna--



OH, MY SWEET TATER PIE A LA MODE SERVED IN GRANDMA MOSES' STRAW HAT!!!



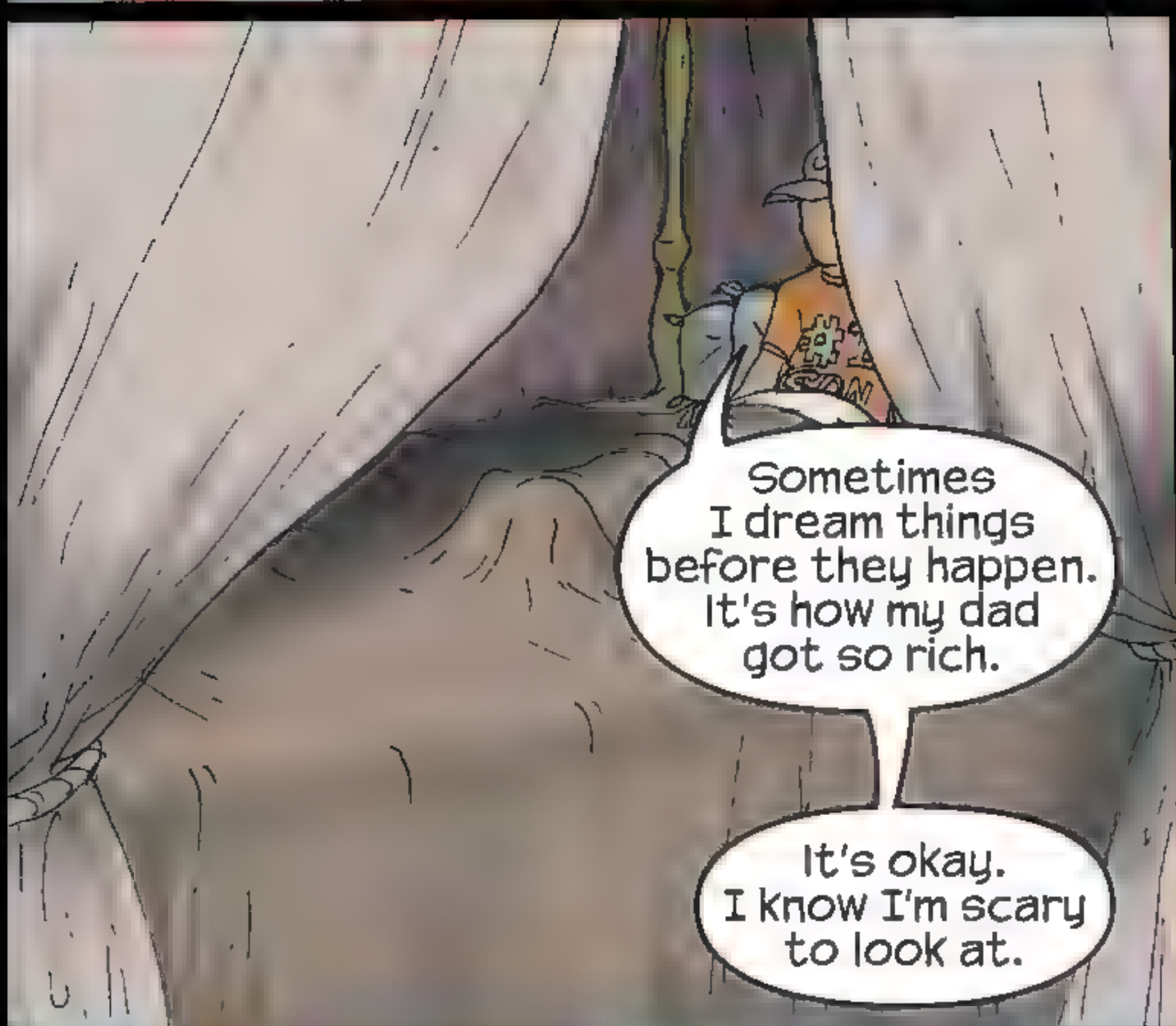
Hi, mister.



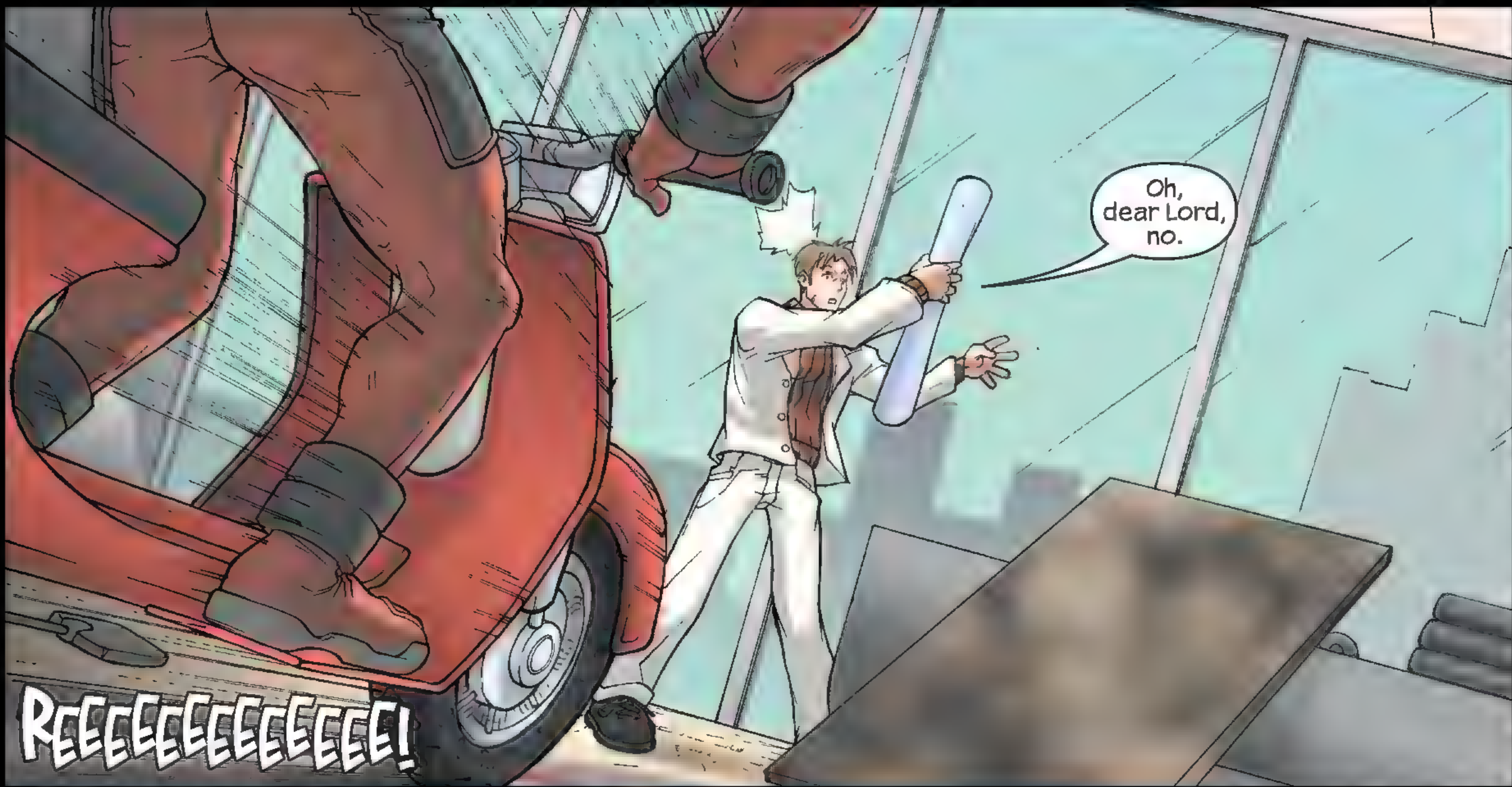
Urp. Oh, urp. Yes, hi, yes.

Yep, that's one *unique* child you got there, C.L... I mean, *whoa*.

Hee. You're funny.









And just when I'm feeling some of that feeling I don't get too often. You know; pride of doing the right thing?

Message from your dear neighbor across the street:

His. Kid. Is.

Off-limits!

Kids. Are.

Off-limits!



That's when it hits me.

GNNNNUUUHHH!



The worst headache yet. By far.

Oh, Black Swan. If I don't jump out the window, you're going to *pay* for this.

Good job, Christopher.

I didn't do it! He just collapsed or something.



And this is right about where we came in, right? Me on the floor with a death wish?

Hold your fire, Joe.

I'm trying, Mr. B! But he's...

Hold. Your. fire.

Oh, won't somebody please try to tell me...

TACTICAL MASTER Cal 9mm







Soon...

You know, David, you don't *have* to stay trapped in this room. I know some people, they run this school in Westchester for kids like you.

You could go and *see* it, at least.

Damn. I suck at this.



I can't, Mr. 'Pool. My dad needs me.



Hey, don't go all Afternoon Special on me, okay?

Look, if you're afraid the kids will see what you look like...



Mr. 'Pool, *you're* the one with the mask on.

Heh. I hate smart kids.

What's this?



It's a picture I drew. I dreamed it. I'm sorry.

Sorry? What are you talking about? I love it! I like the blood especially.



"Well, I gotta go, David. But I'll come back and see you sometime, all right?"

"No. No, you won't, Mr. 'Pool. I'm sorry."



"I'm the one with the mask." Stupid kid!



Bye-bye, Image Inducer.



Hey! Hey!! Cheese in my shoe! Cheese in my shooooe!

Hey, Ratbag! Nice to smell a friendly stench! What's got your fleas in a bunch?

Rrrrrrrr!
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!



S...s... Sandi! Sandi!

Sandi hospital!!!

NEXT ISSUE:
HEALING FACTOR:
THE CONCLUSION.



M A R V E L[®] C O M I C S

DEADPOOL

MARVEL

69

**SIMONE
UDON**

This is what happens.

People get hurt. They get torn up. They get broken for no good reason.

I see the normals mourning on TV, weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth-- it's like looking at alien life forms through a badly aimed telescope. I don't know how to do that. Wouldn't know where to start.

Normal people cry or scream, and then they feel *better*. I *never* feel better. I *forgot* how to feel better.

I don't know how to make *her* feel any better, either. What am I supposed to do-- throw my arms around her and tell her things are gonna be okay? Nobody wants someone like me doing that to them. It'd be like getting a valentine with a dead rat in it.

I'm only good at one thing; being a dangerous guy, and lately I can't even do *that* right. This virus in my brain is accelerating-- wiping memories faster than I can make new ones. From what the Taskmaster tells me, I figure I'm maybe two days away from a lifetime of safety-scissors and finger-painting.

Two days.

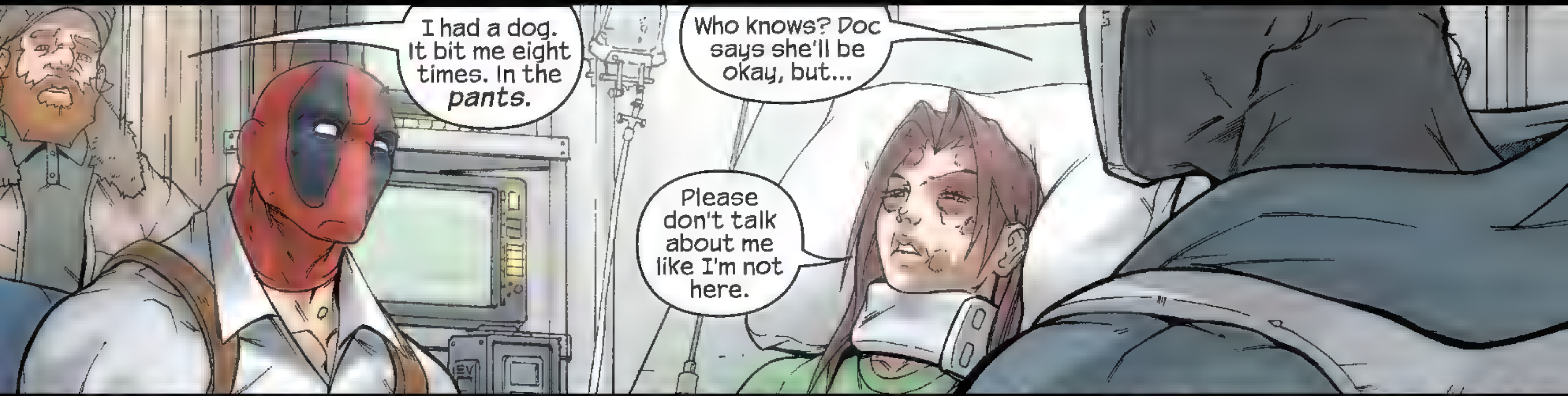
Plenty of time to make sure this doesn't happen to you again, Sandi.



It was her boyfriend. Apparently, this isn't the first time.

Cops on this yet?

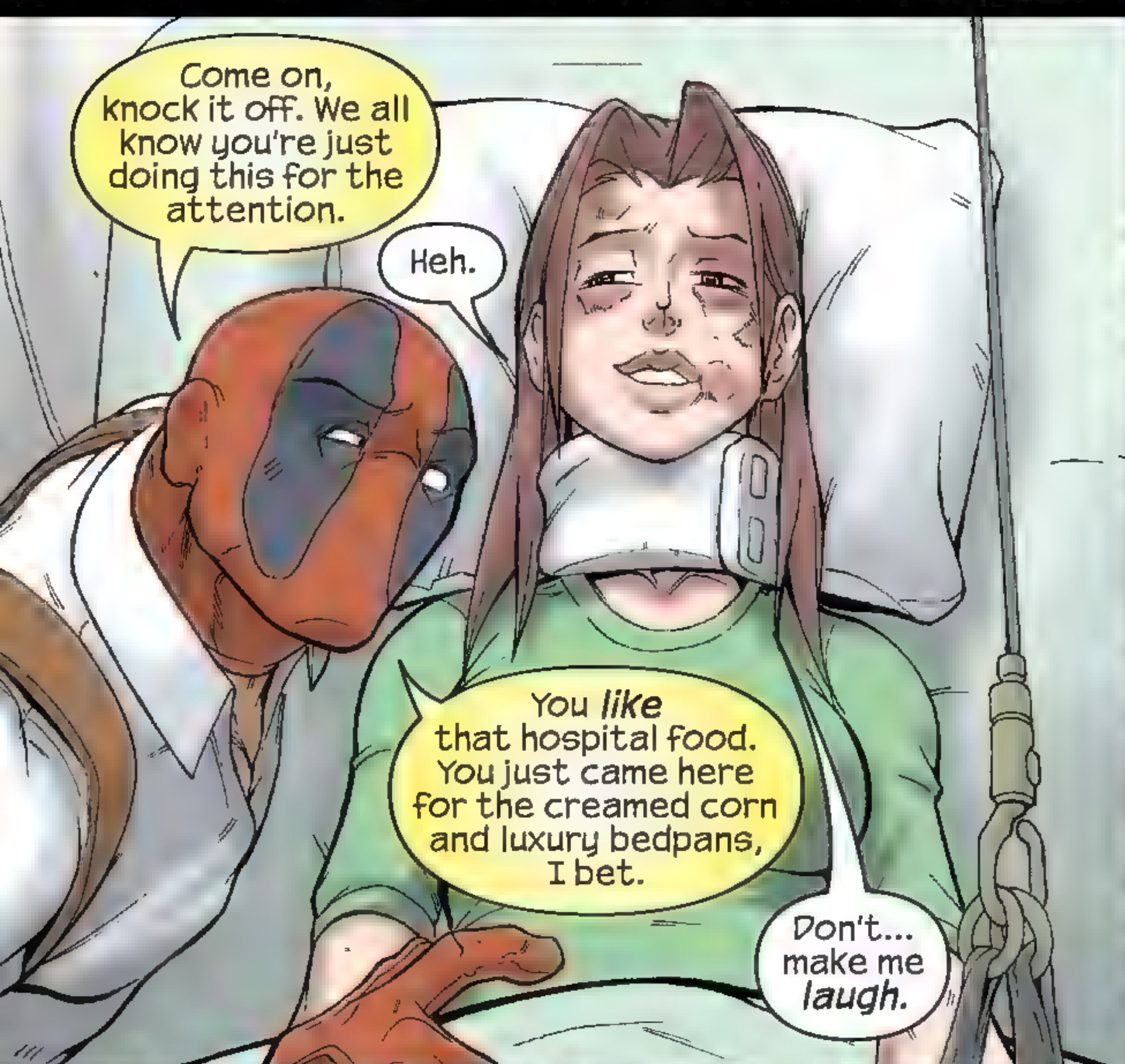
Don't tell me he's been arrested already. Just *don't*.



I had a dog. It bit me eight times. In the *pants*.

Who knows? Doc says she'll be okay, but...

Please don't talk about me like I'm not here.

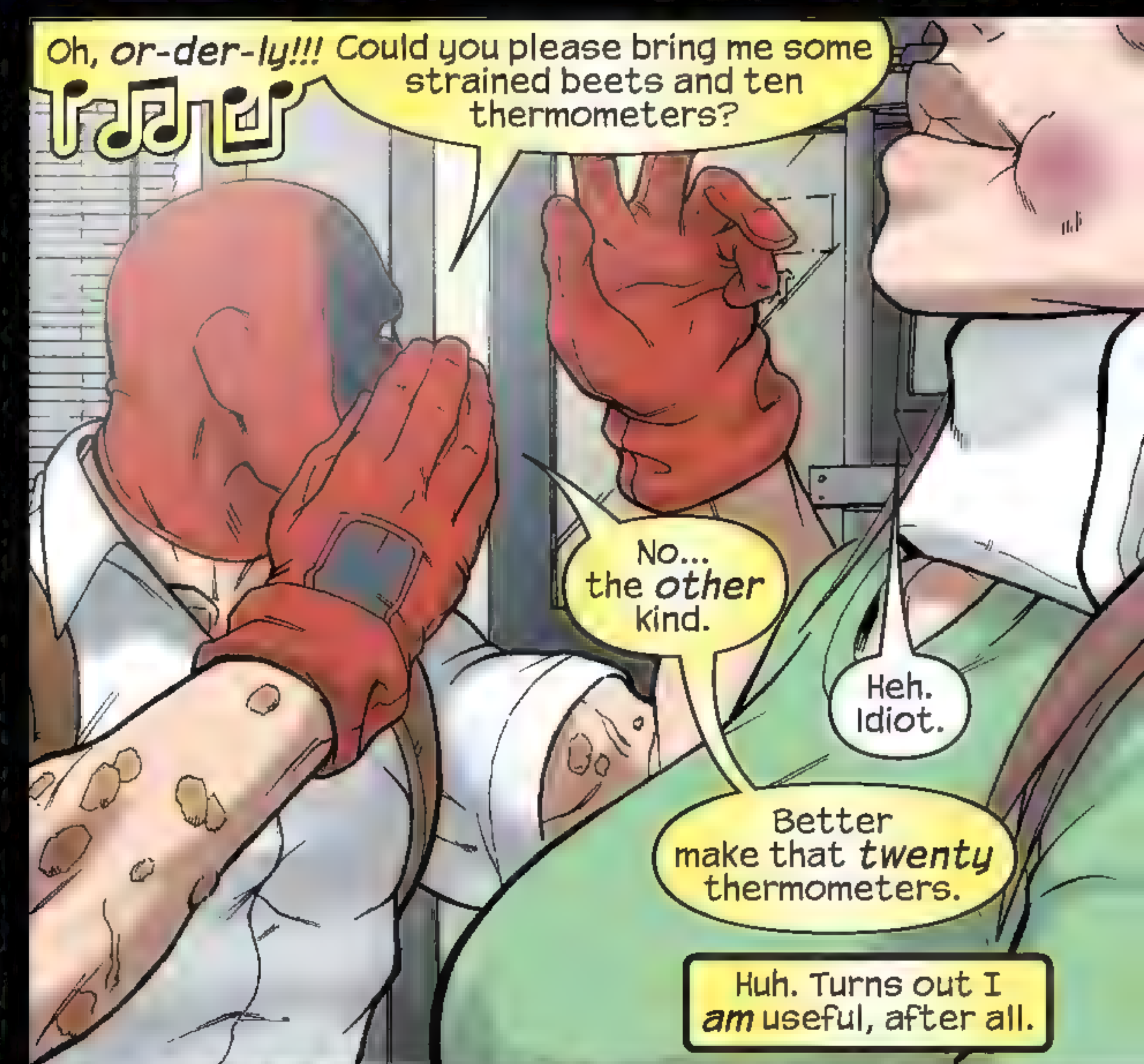


Come on, knock it off. We all know you're just doing this for the attention.

Heh.

You *like* that hospital food. You just came here for the creamed corn and luxury bedpans, I bet.

Don't... make me laugh.



Oh, *or-der-ly*!!! Could you please bring me some strained beets and ten thermometers?

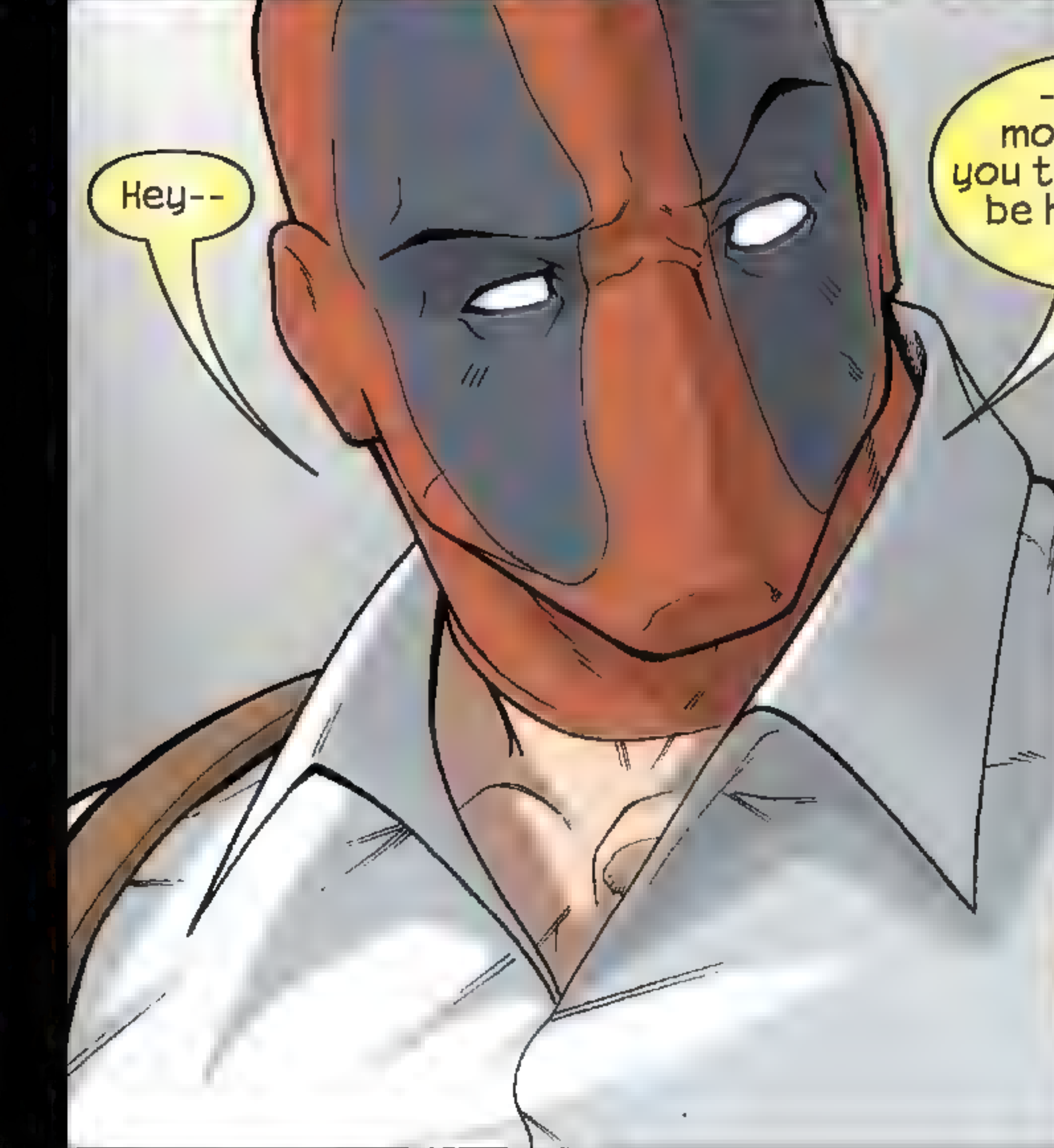
♪

No... the *other* kind.

Heh. Idiot.

Better make that *twenty* thermometers.

Huh. Turns out I *am* useful, after all.



Hey--

--Didn't your mother ever tell you that you oughtta be hanging around *nice* guys?



Yeah. Guess I should find some, huh?



Sandi, I have to find this Black Swan guy who put this *thing* in my head. Maybe he can--I don't know--restore my hard drive or something.

Or maybe he'll just kill me. Either way, I can't stay. I'm sorry.



I know. I'll be okay. You go. I'm tougher than I look right now.

I'll stay a while, Wilson. I got time.

Okay. Good. But Sandi, before I go -- this "boyfriend" of yours...



I don't want Jerry killed.

But... look at what he...

I don't want his death on my conscience. Promise me, Mr. Wilson.

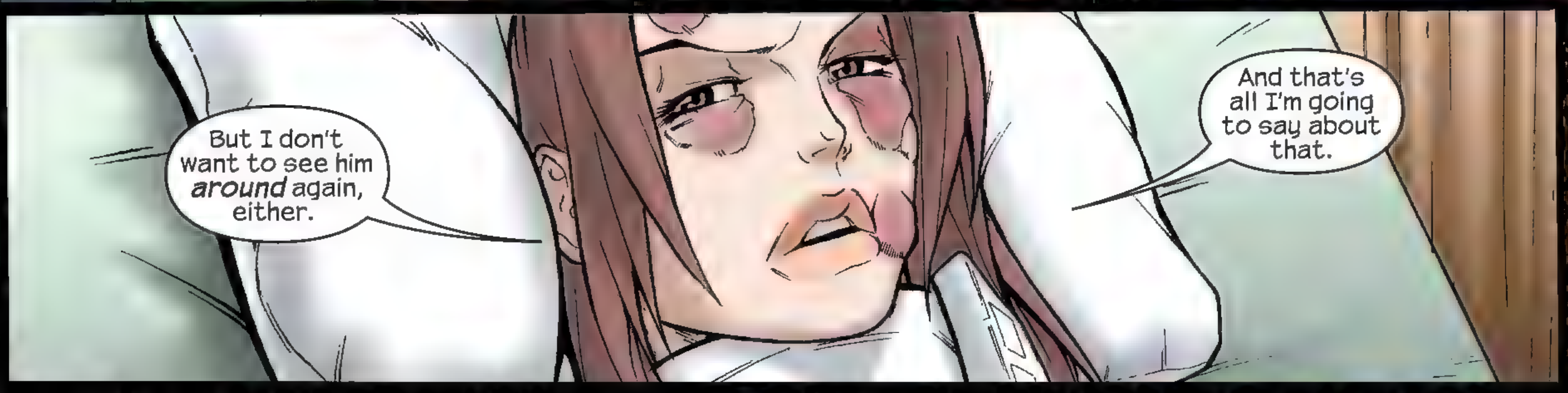
But... but...



GAAAAAAAH!

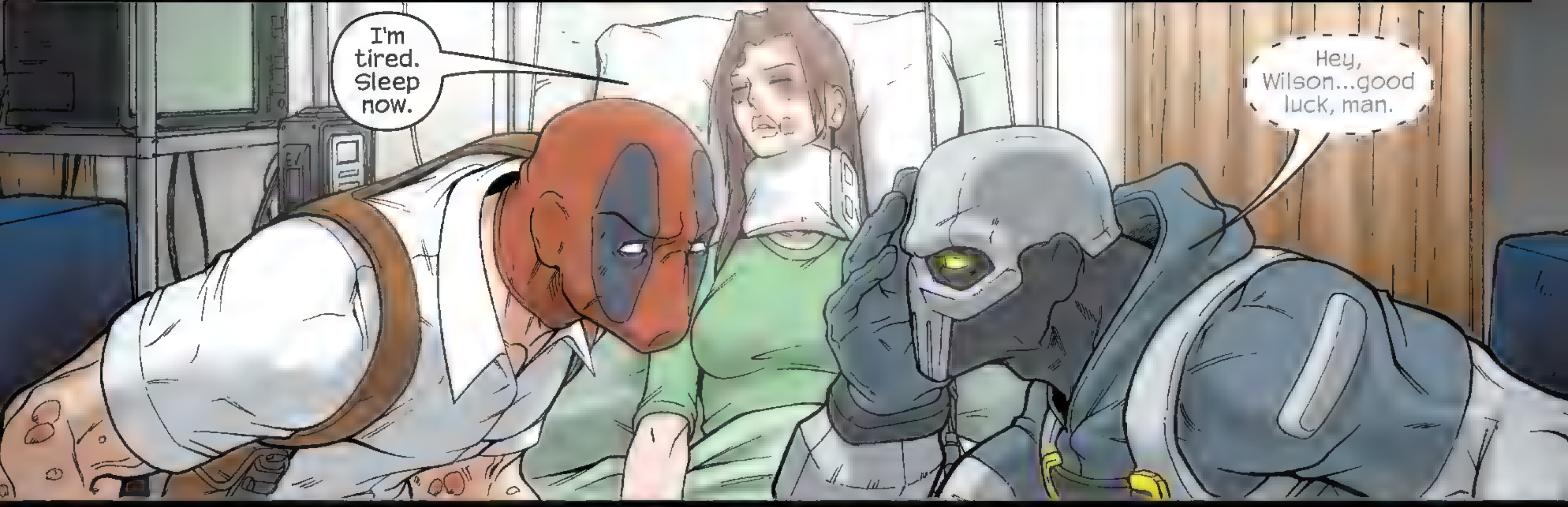
All right. You win. No killing.

Well, *that's* a fine how-do-you-do. Why not tell the birds not to sing? Why not tell beer not to be sudsy and flavorful?



But I don't want to see him *around* again, either.

And that's all I'm going to say about that.



I'm tired. Sleep now.

Hey, Wilson...good luck, man.



"I don't want his death on my conscience." If that's what having a *conscience* means, I'm glad I don't *have* one. ~fume pout fume!~

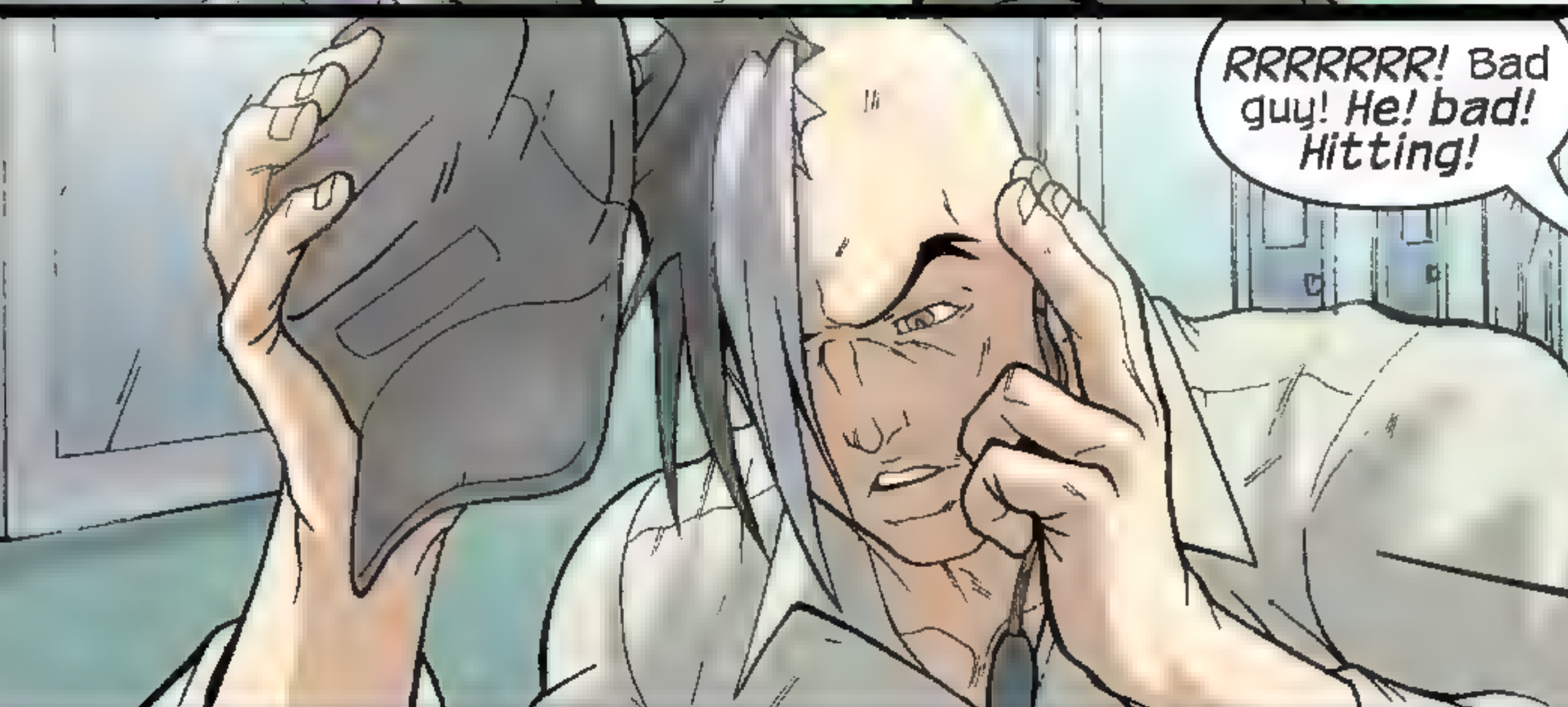
You!



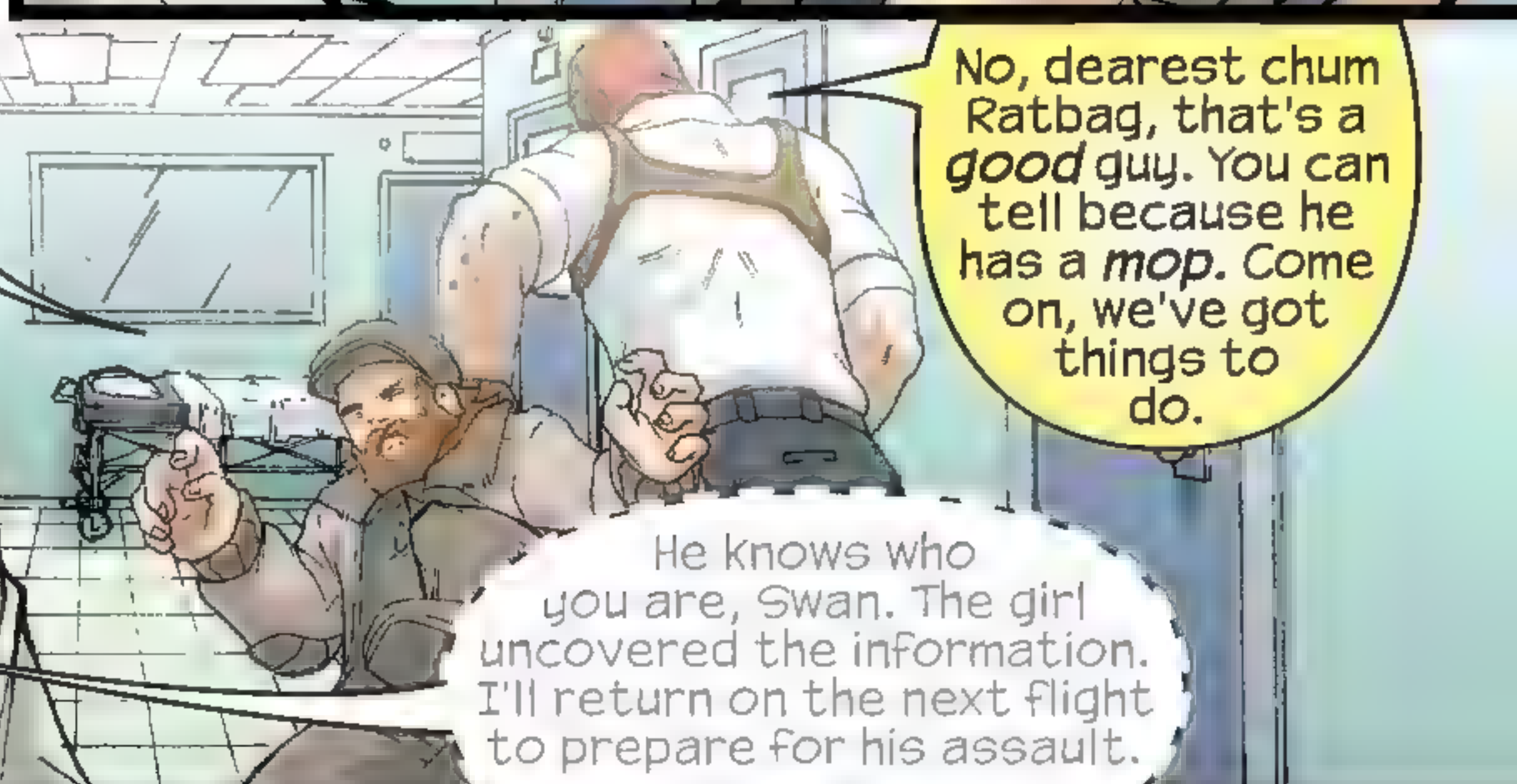
The woman in that room-- from this minute on, she gets *every-thing she wants*. If she wants ice cream, you kidnap Ben and Jerry. If she wants a champagne sponge bath, you personally do the swabbing. Are we clear?

Uh...yes, sir. Very clear.

Hey! Hot soup! Hot soup!!! I spilled it in my lap! Chunky lap soup! Caution!

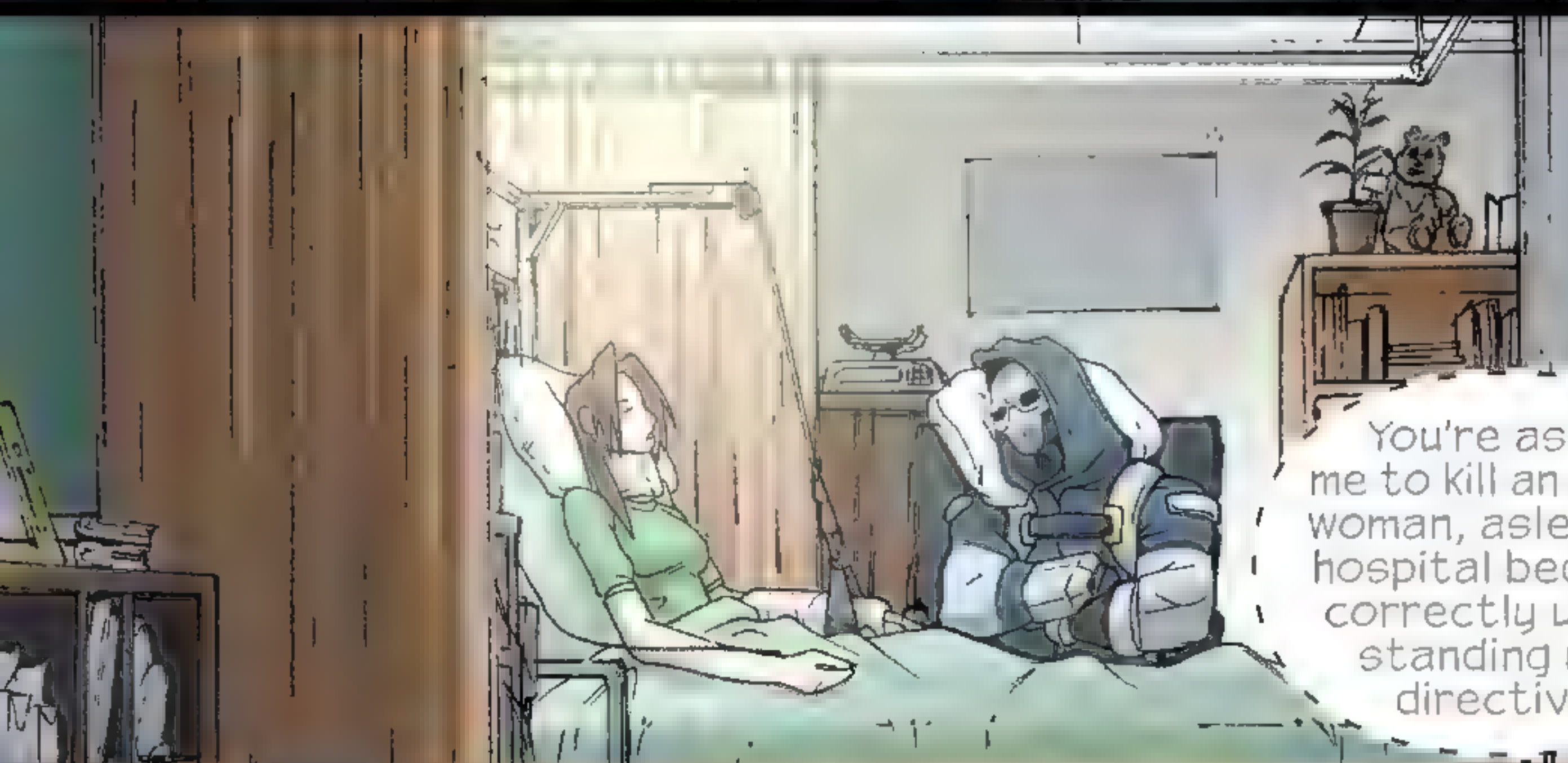


RRRRRRR! Bad guy! He! bad! Hitting!

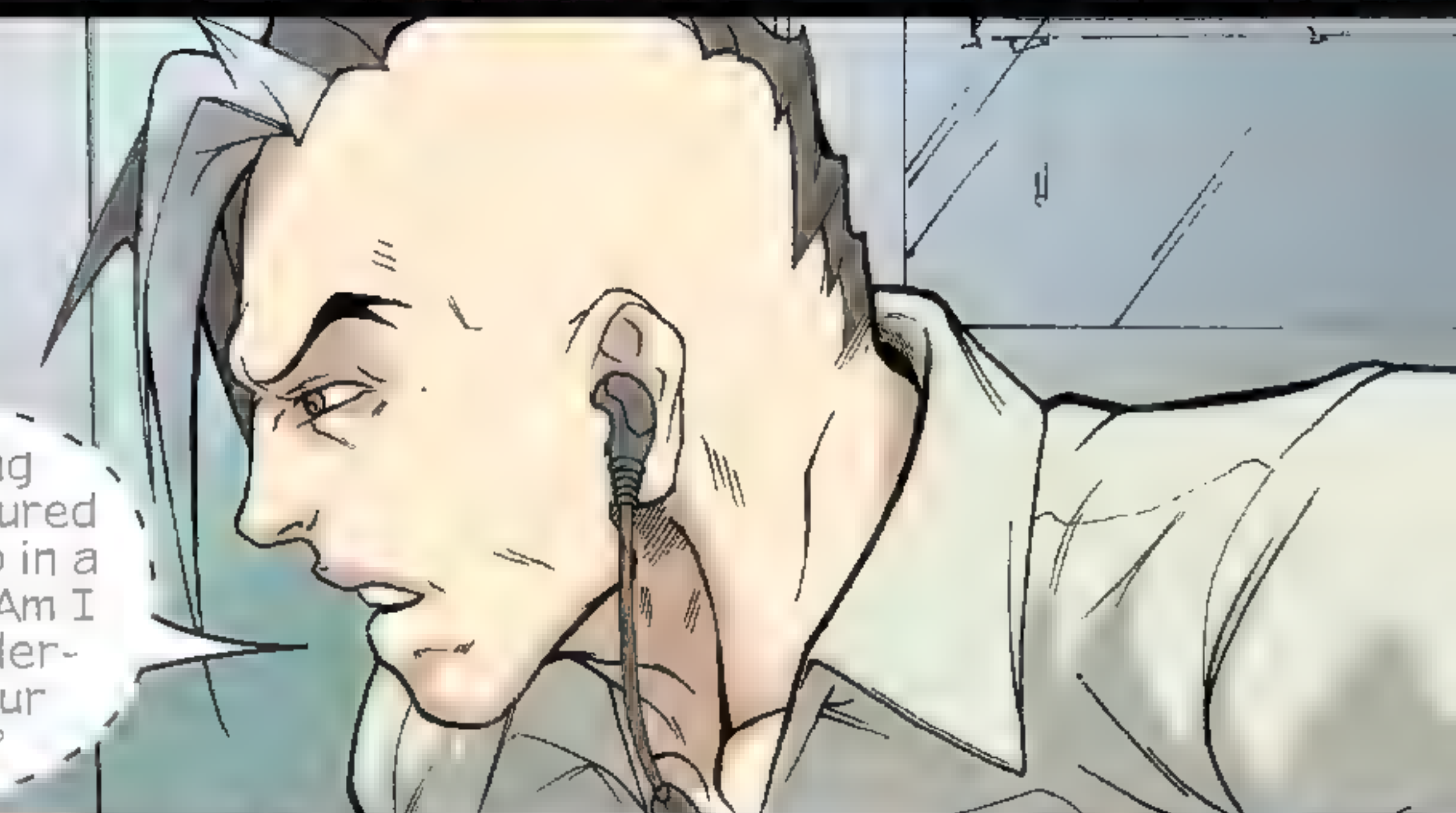


No, dearest chum Ratbag, that's a *good* guy. You can tell because he has a *mop*. Come on, we've got things to do.

He knows who you are, Swan. The girl uncovered the information. I'll return on the next flight to prepare for his assault.



You're asking me to kill an injured woman, asleep in a hospital bed. Am I correctly understanding your directive?

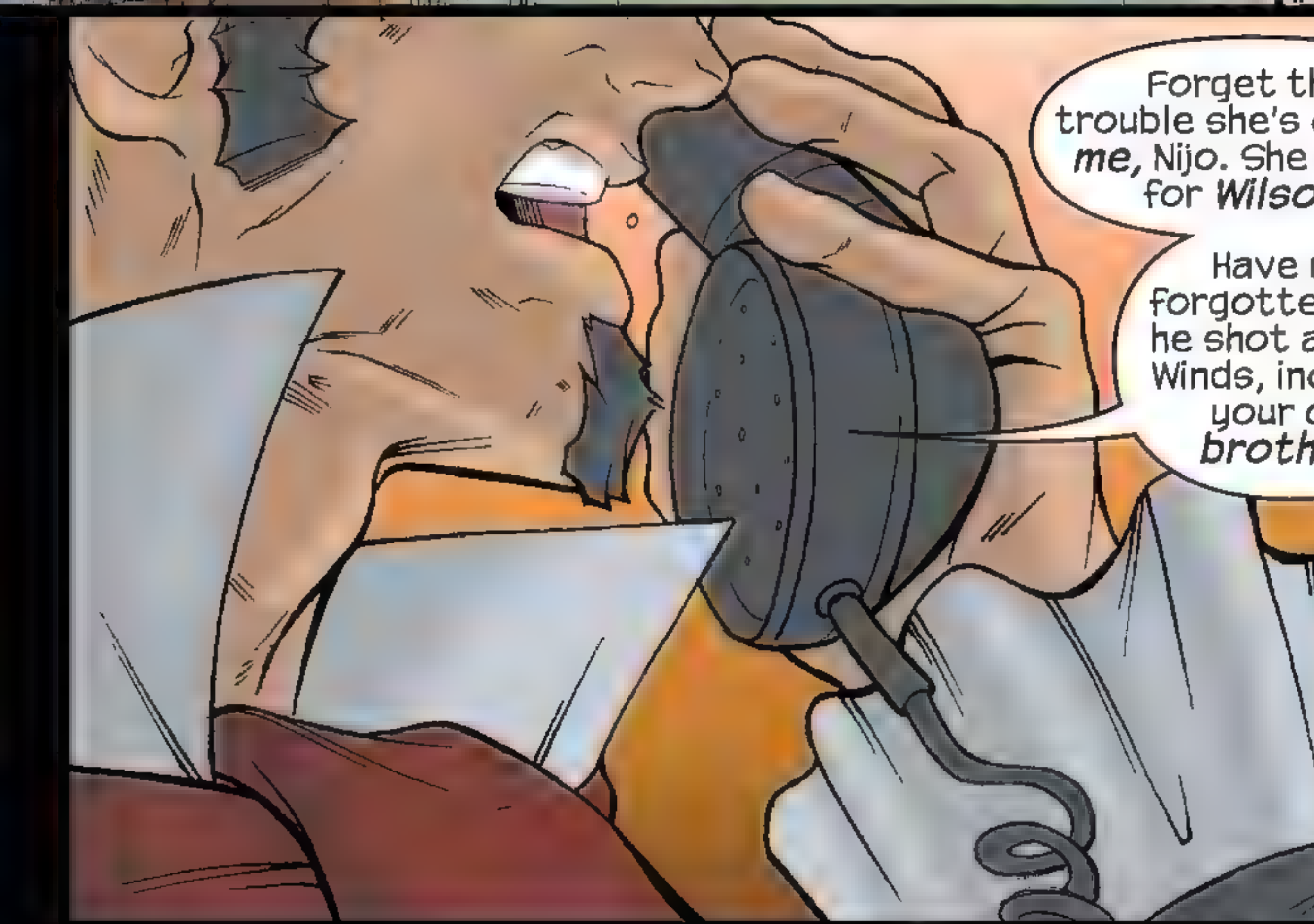


Forget the trouble she's caused *me*, Nijo. She works for *Wilson*.

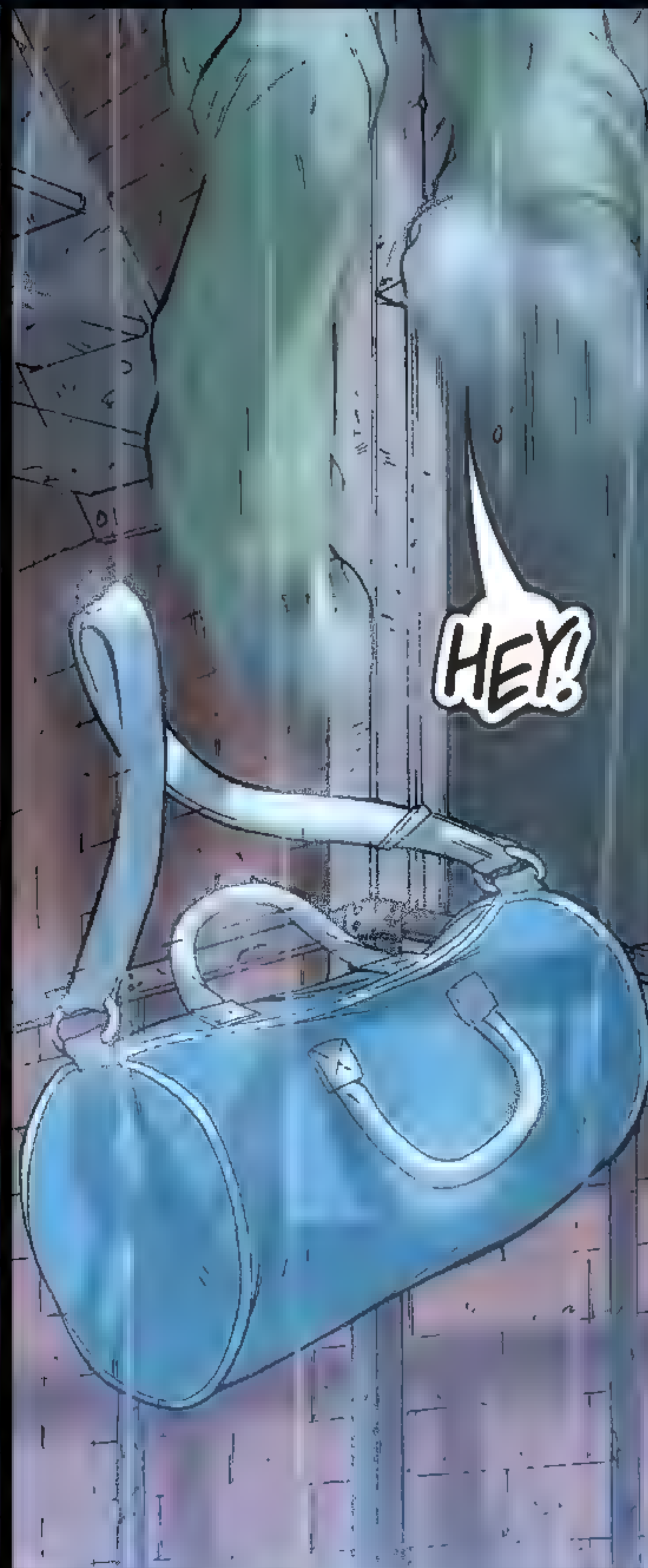
Have you forgotten that he shot all Four Winds, including your own *brother*?

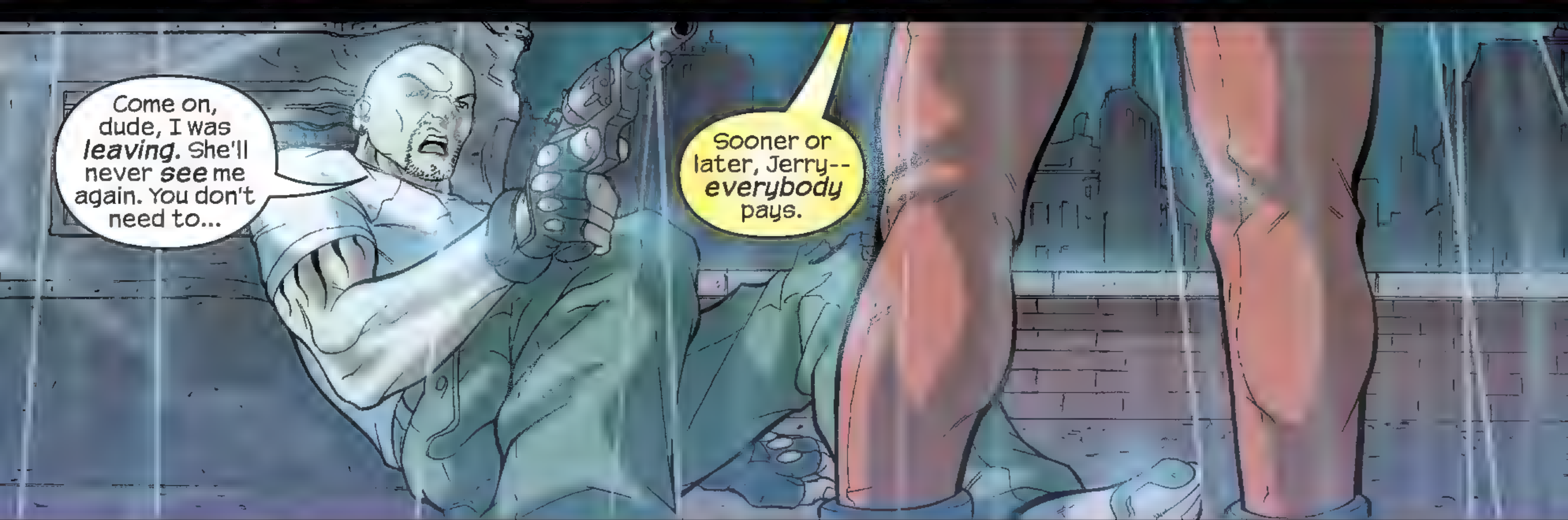
Wilson will pay his debt at my hands, as we agreed. Wilson, and no other.

Get someone else to do your spying and peeping for you.



Nijo? Nijo!!!





Come on, dude, I was *leaving*. She'll never see me again. You don't need to...

Sooner or later, Jerry-- *everybody* pays.

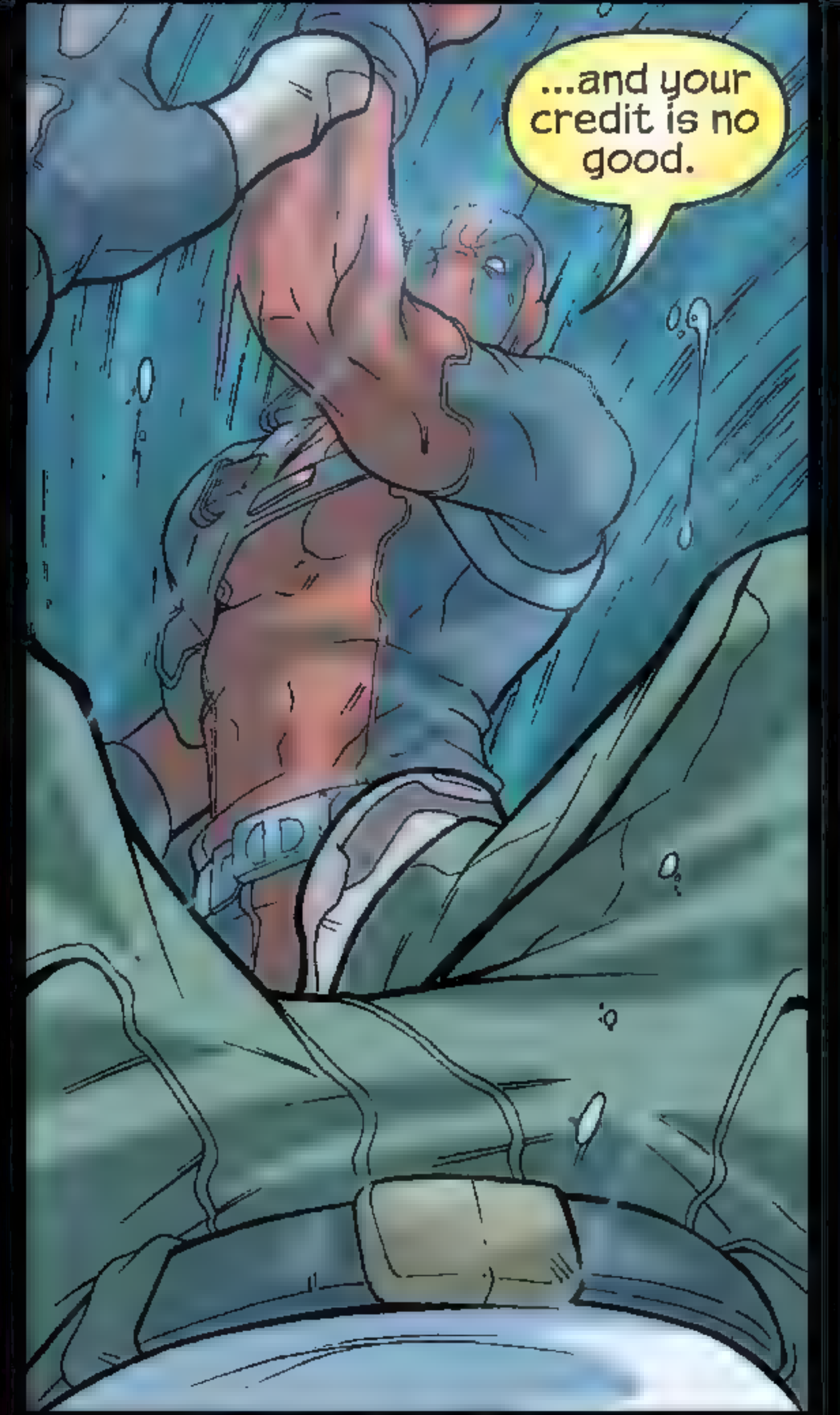
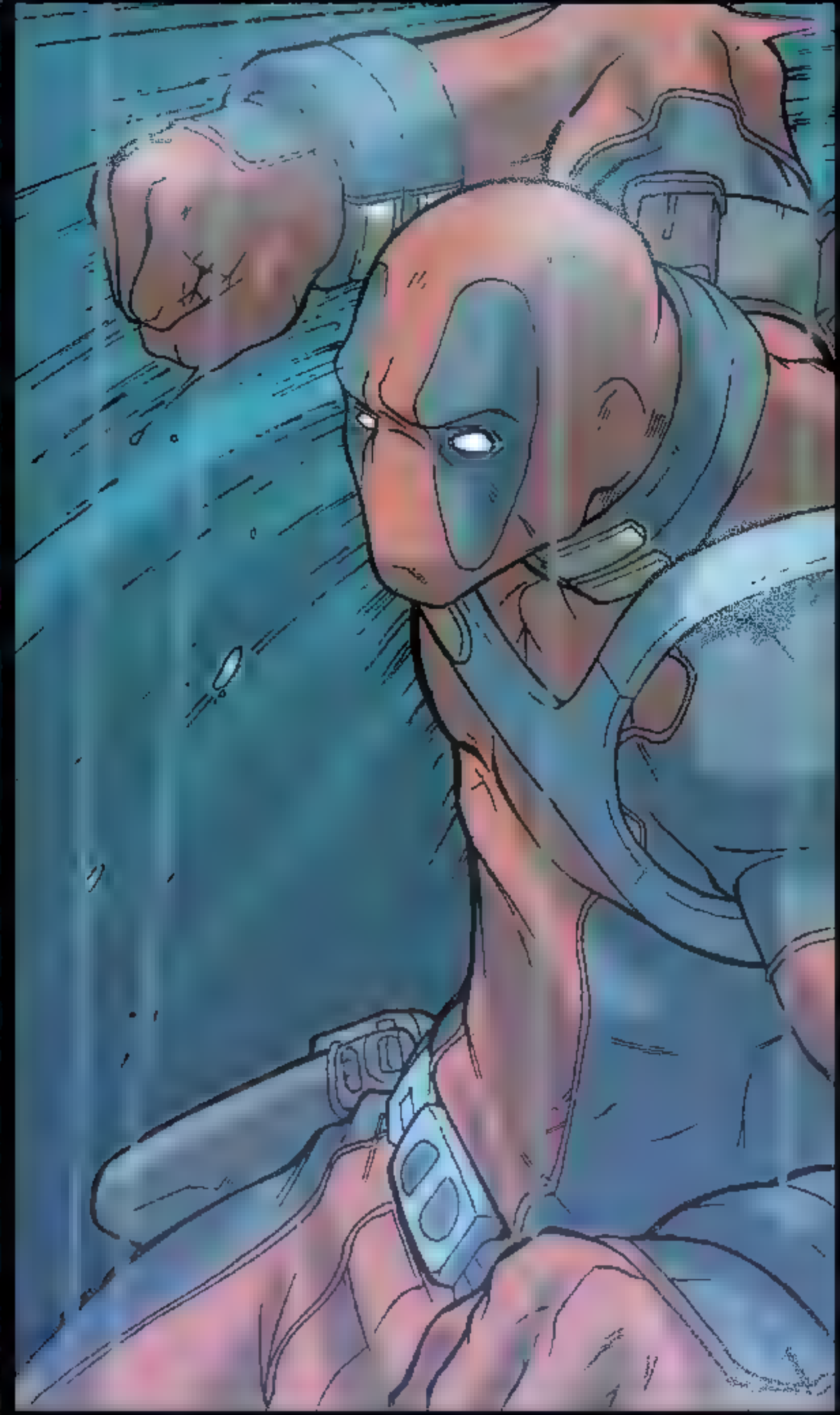
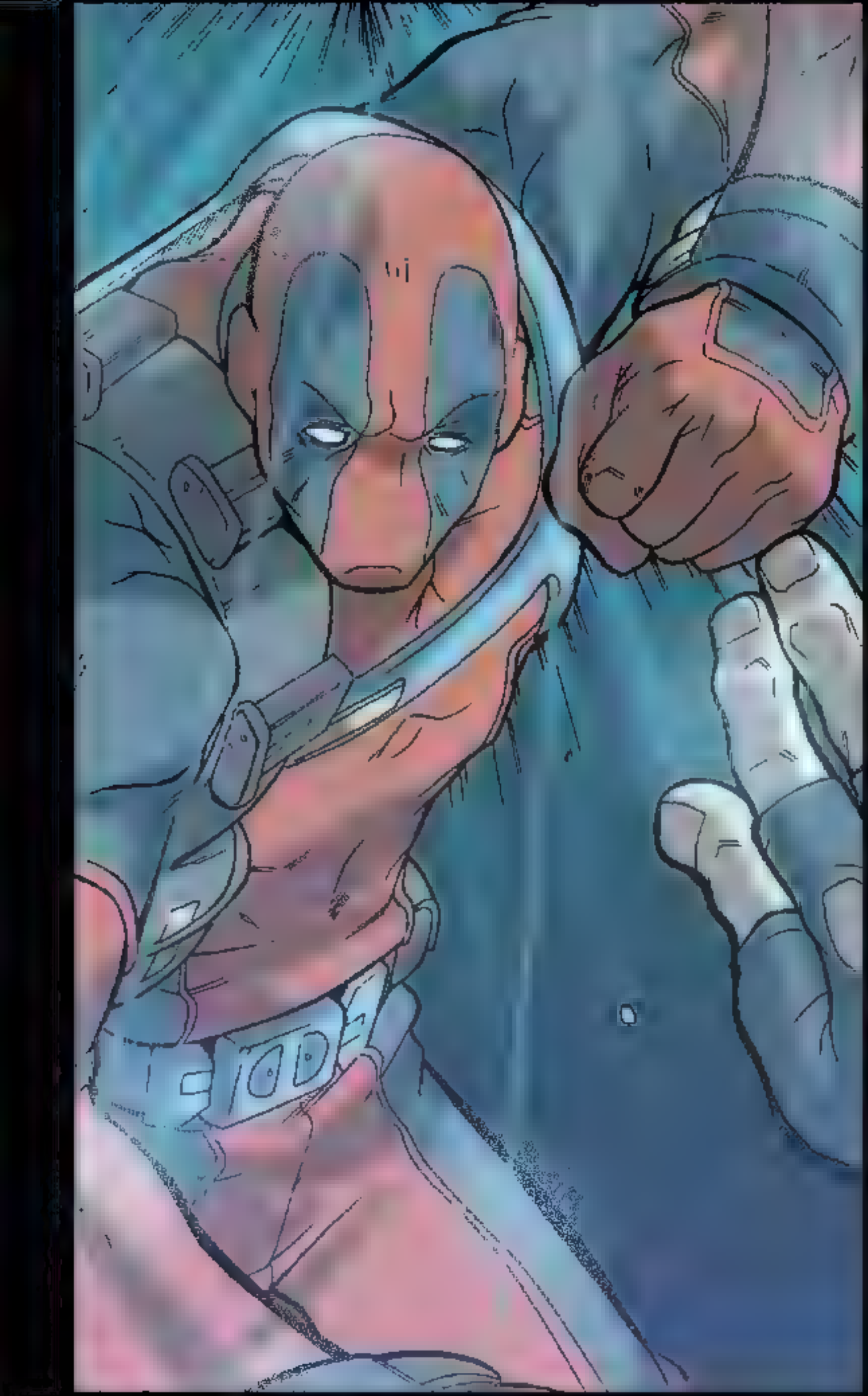


Aw, come on, come on... I'll *leave*. I swear it.

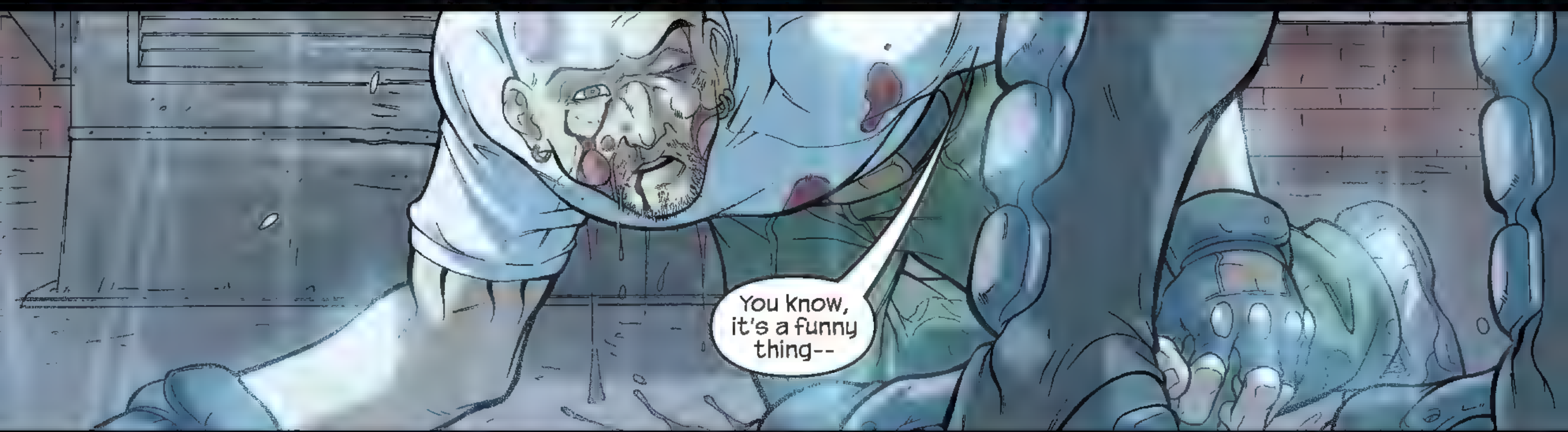
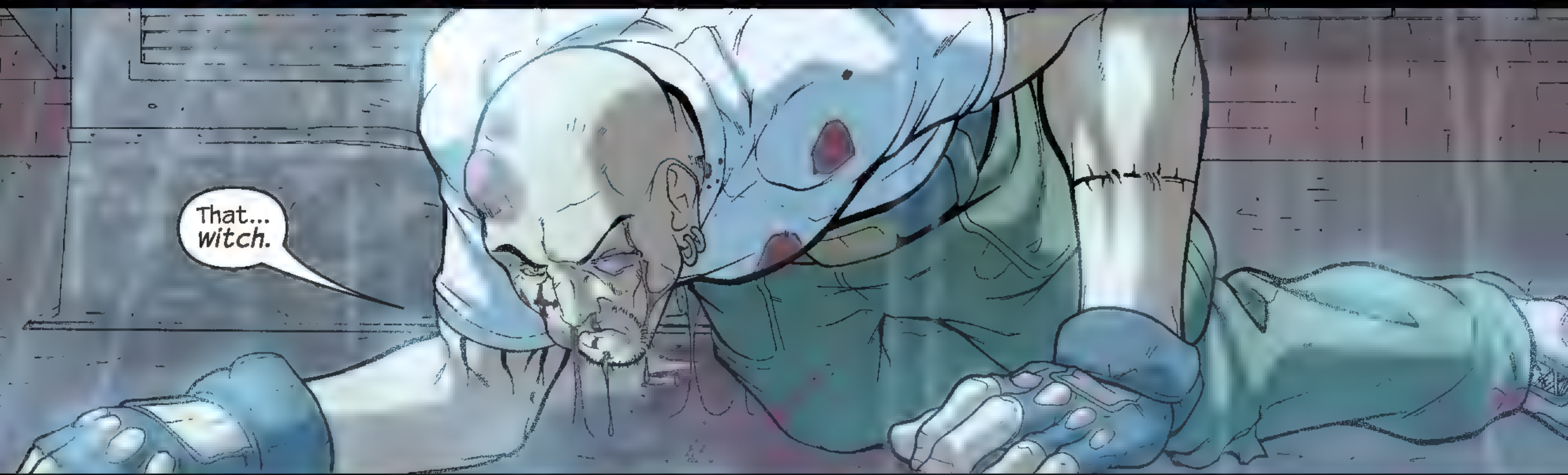
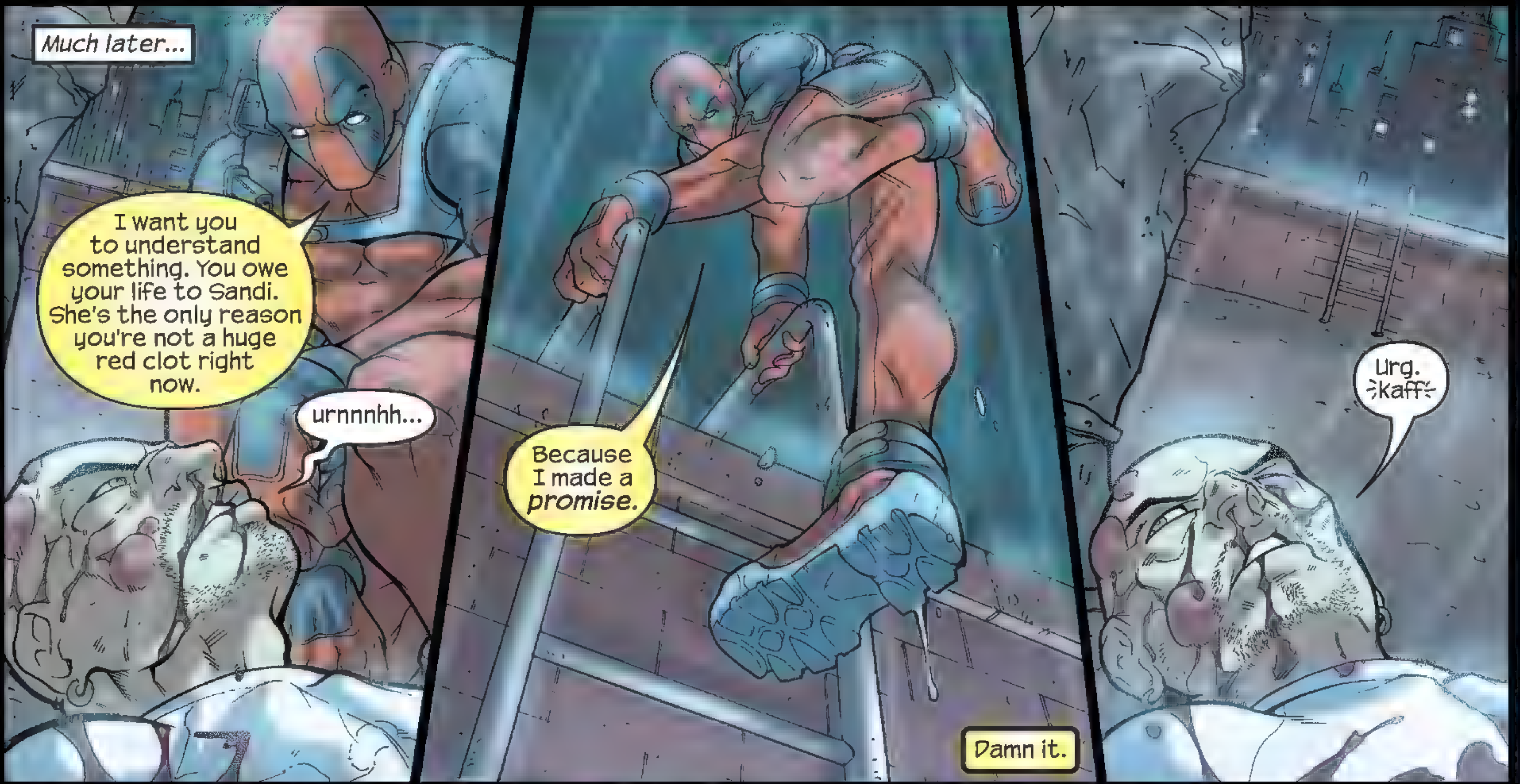
Be quiet, Jerry.



You owe a bill here...



...and your credit is no good.





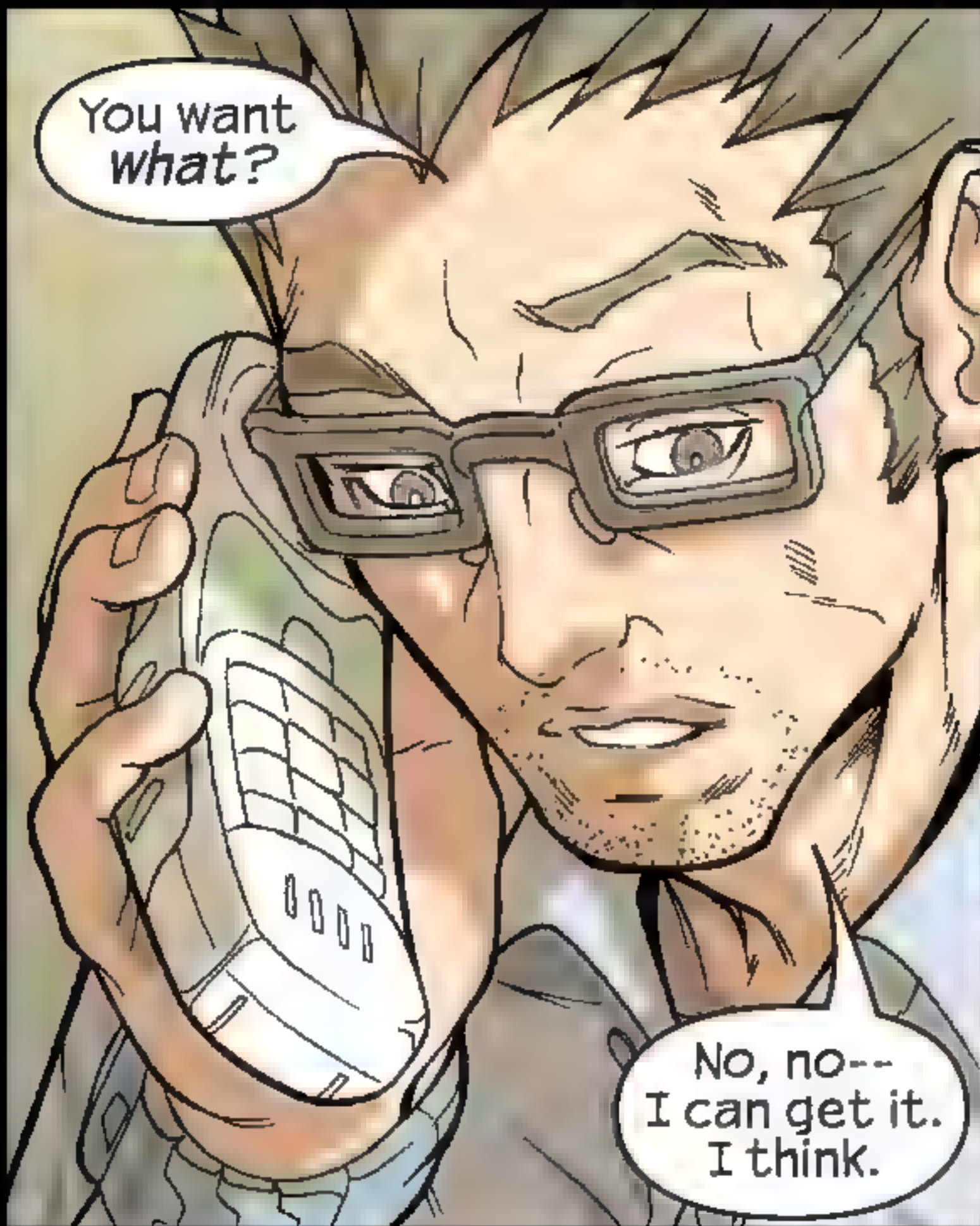
The offices of DP, INC...

Go shave and sandpaper your breath, boy wonder. I've got some calls to make, and then we're headed for Germany.

To the rat-poles!



No. I don't *want* to know what you're doing.
Just...be careful.



You want *what*?

No, no-- I can get it. I think.



Well, when I have to go, I make sure they're fully retracted. Hey, who *is* this?



"Do I have Bucky in a can?" That's in pretty poor *taste*, mister.



No, I will *not* do that. Not *that*, either, you disgusting pervert!



HAHAHA!



Listen, your boss owes me a favor, and I *intend* to collect.



Very well, Mr. Deadpool. We'll arrange your transport, no questions asked.



"And I'm sure we can provide a proper security detail, as well."

"But then, you forget my name and I never hear your voice again, agreed?"

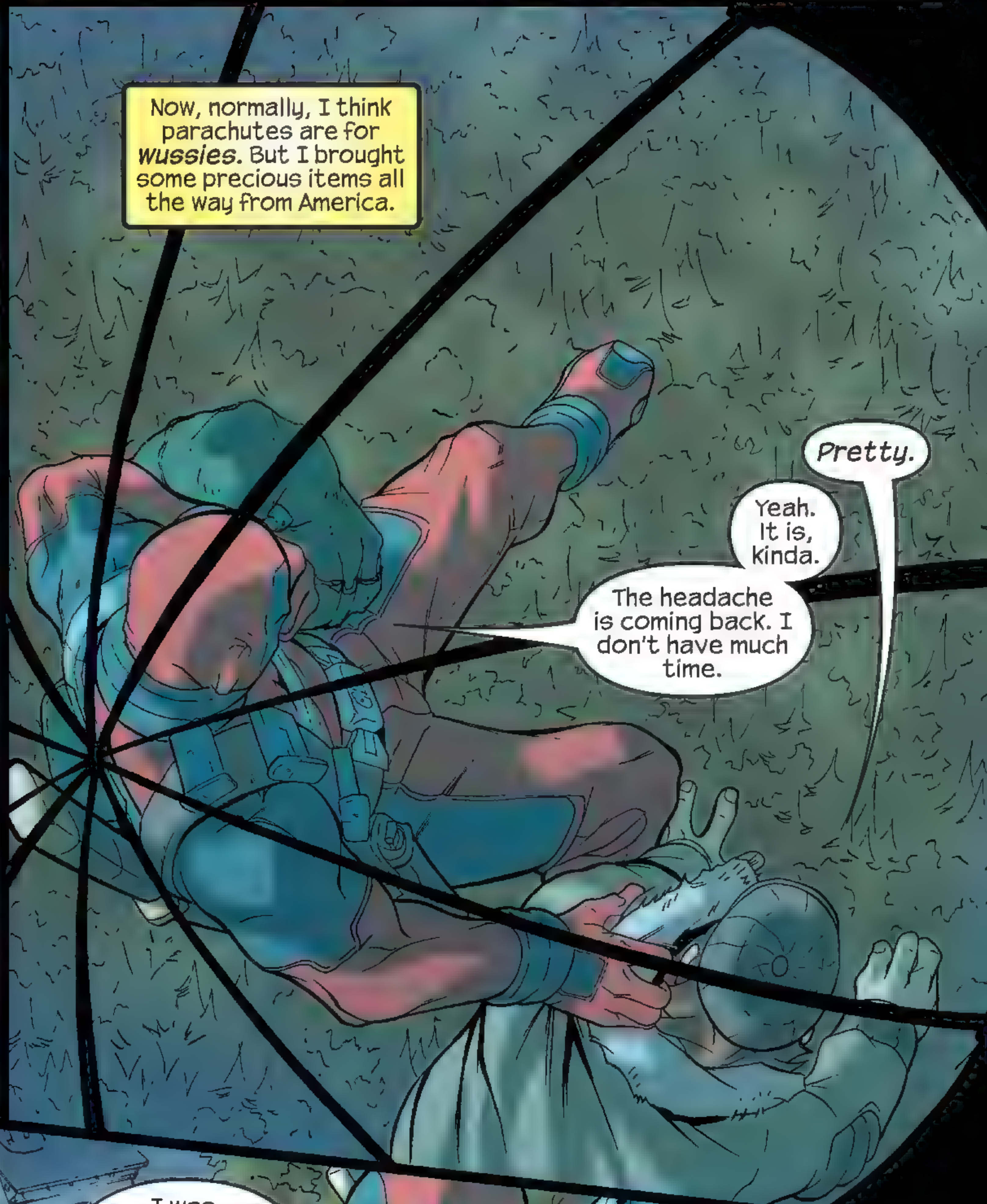
Hey, you guys ever notice that the great bluesmen are always *sad*? Why don't they play some happy, *peppy* blues?

"I got the 'bout to get killed blues... Don't know how to play the harmonica, neither... But aren't soft kittens *adorable*? I say *adorable*! HAA! Say it again!"

Don't worry, General. I can pretty much guarantee that.



So long, jarheads-- Keep working on that hospitality thang!



Now, normally, I think parachutes are for *wussies*. But I brought some precious items all the way from America.

Pretty.

Yeah. It is, kinda.

The headache is coming back. I don't have much time.



I was gonna fix up *my* apartment like this-- add some turrets and a moat and stuff. But I been busy lately, you know how it is.

I'm in love with Katie Couric.

I absolve thee.



He's here.

I fear I shall have to admit that I do not choose my annoyances well, Nijo. I've spent far too much time on Wilson for the small amount of pleasure his discomfort has given me.

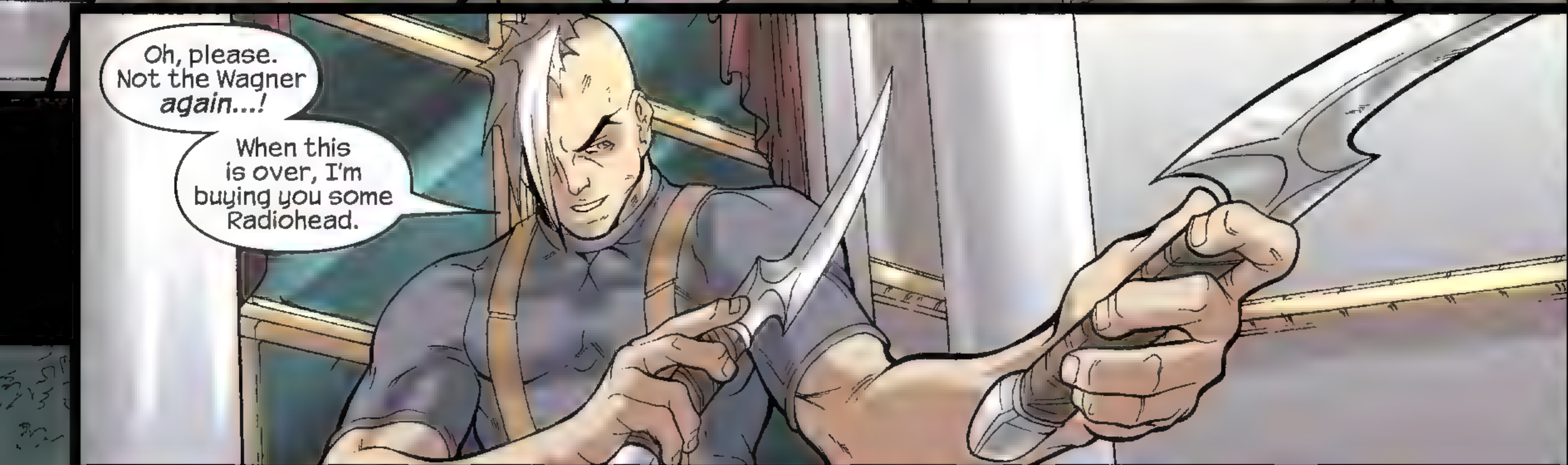
Let him come.



Dinter, take the carriers and see if you can fetch him here. You have my permission to wound him, if you can. Mind the landscaping, please.

Yes, Swan.

And put the Valkyries in the CD, won't you? No...the Twilight.



Oh, please. Not the Wagner again...!

When this is over, I'm buying you some Radiohead.



RAA OOOOOOORRRR!

Aaah! Mutant dune buggies! They want our women! They want our women!

Hey, wait a minute... I just remembered that I'm completely mental.

That gives me a refreshingly new set of options.

Hey, guys. Let's carpool!

Now, if you'd have been securely seat-belted, this wouldn't have happened at all.

Safe mutant dune bugging is *no accident*, says 'Pooley, the Safety Freak!

KRRRR-THUNNNN!

What...?

He's downstairs!

My beautiful, beautiful foyer. Oh, no. No.

He's in the castle. Come on, this way.

What? How do you know which way he...?



My portrait!

Call it a hunch.



Don't break my heart. My shake-y, quake-y heart.

Good Lord. He's using country music!

He dies! He dies screaming!



What if God liked one of us?

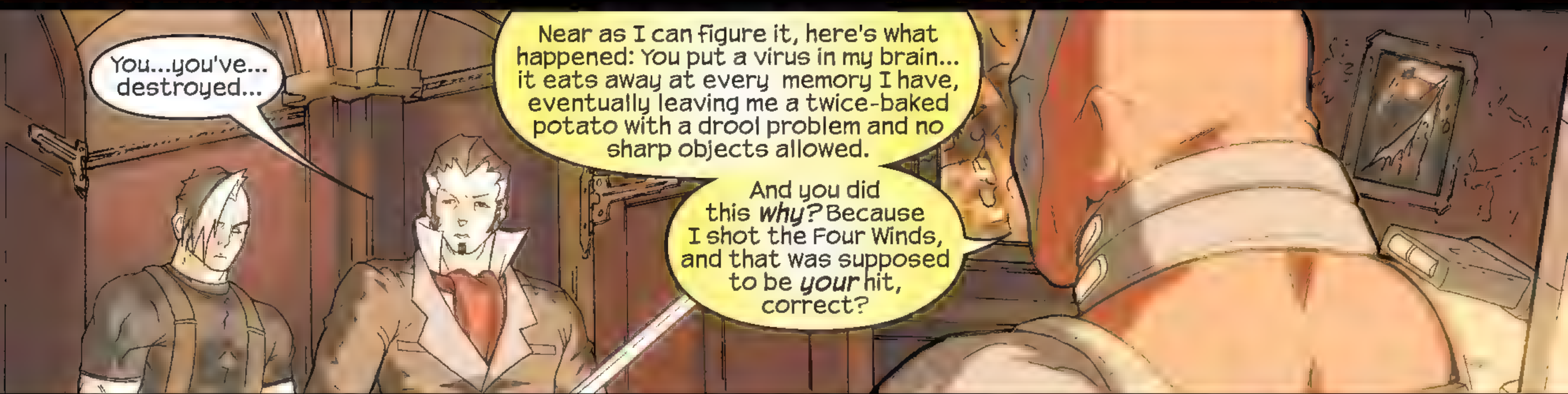
The sound system is in my den. Haste!

He's moved on to alternative folk rock! This is one evil man.



Hello, Swan.

Hope you don't mind that I made myself at home.



You...you've...
destroyed...

Near as I can figure it, here's what
happened: You put a virus in my brain...
it eats away at every memory I have,
eventually leaving me a twice-baked
potato with a drool problem and no
sharp objects allowed.

And you did
this *why*? Because
I shot the Four Winds,
and that was supposed
to be *your* hit,
correct?



You killed
my *brother*,
you son of
a...

Oh, Nijo,
Nijo...

...don't
be an
idiot.



I shot
the Four
Winds. Mr. Wilson
shot a fruit
plate and a
butter
dish.



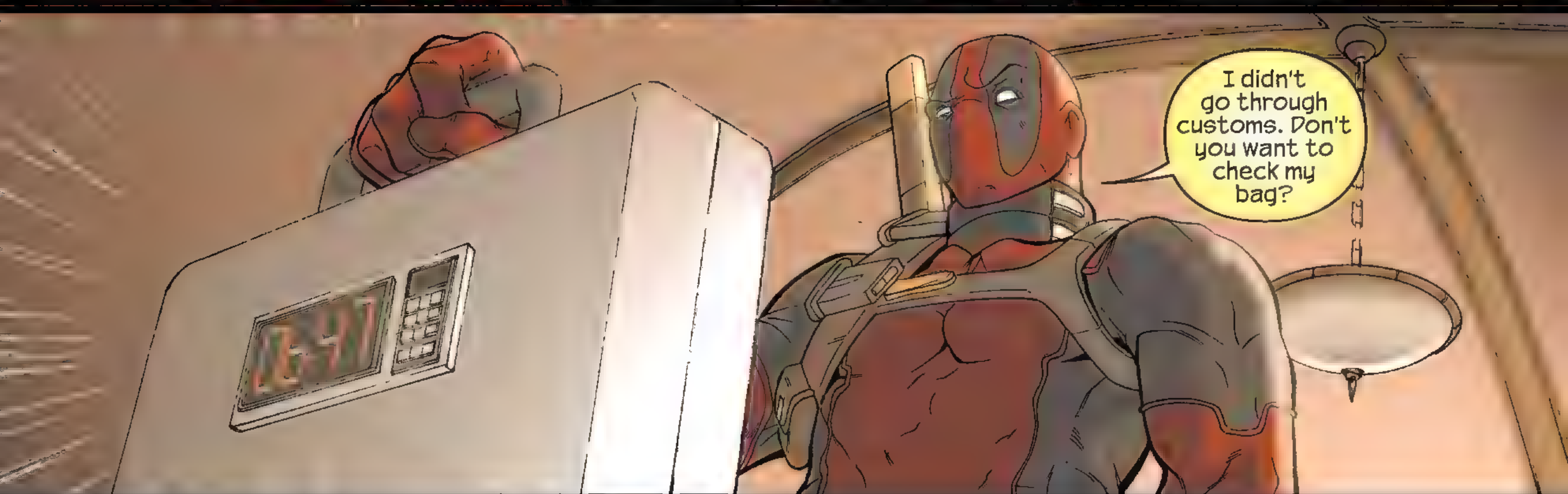
No, Mr. Wilson.
You were falling, glass
flying everywhere. You
couldn't have made
those shots.

But you ruined
what should have
been a fitting end
to my career. My
swan song, if
you will.



I'm uncertain how
you've kept what's left of
your mind still functioning
so far, Mr. Wilson. But
it ends now.

Wait.



I didn't
go through
customs. Don't
you want to
check my
bag?

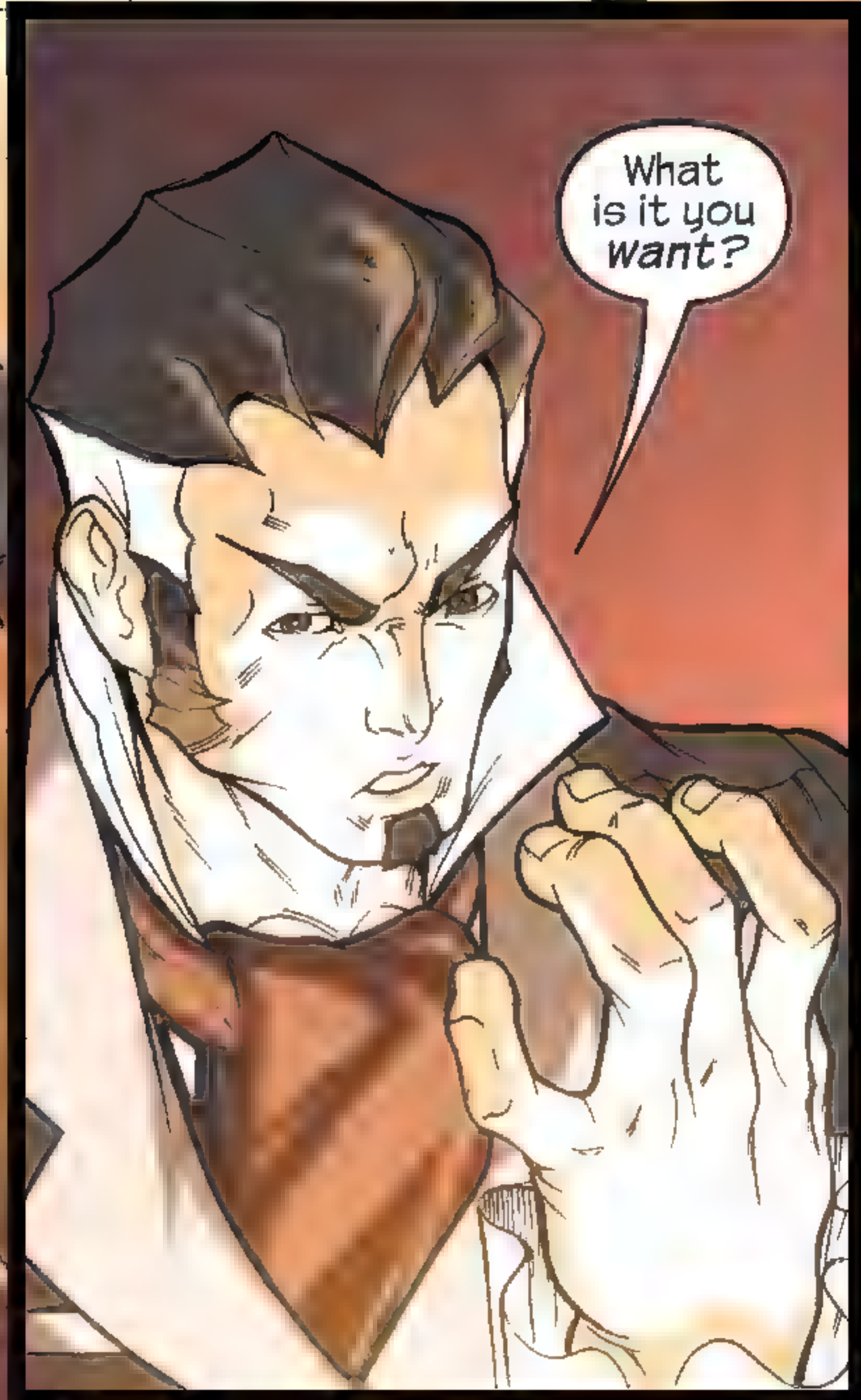


It's a bomb, Swan. It's the bomb-diggity. Five minutes and your little Barbie Dream Castle becomes a unique fixer-upper.



I'm to believe you'd detonate this device, though you, too, would die?

Might. Might not.



What is it you want?



You're good with brains. Fix him.



It might not *work* like that...It's *difficult*. I can move files, but something like this...

...very well. I'll try.



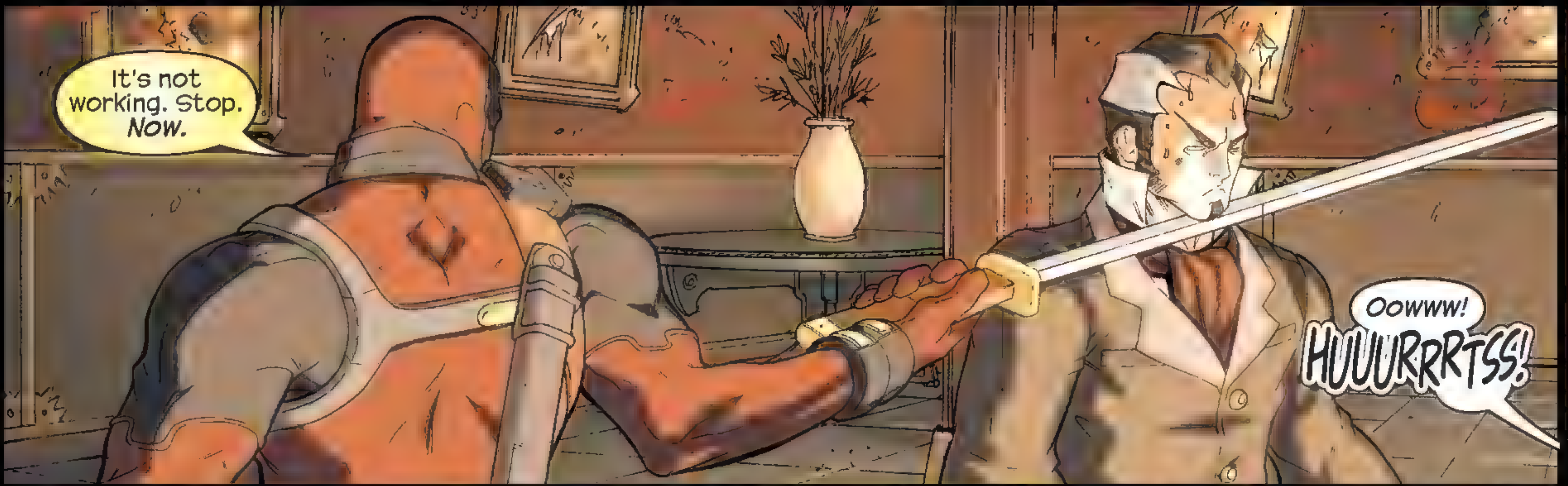
Better hurry.



Whu...
what. Don't.
Scared.



Don't...
PLEASE!



It's not
working. Stop.
Now.

OOWWW!
HUUURRTSS!



I said
now!

What's...
happening?
Mr. Wilson,
what...



gnuh...
ahh...

Ratbag, if you got your
head twisted on right,
you get the hell out
of here. Run. Run
as fast as you
can.

But...I
can see now. I
remember! My
whole... my whole
life!

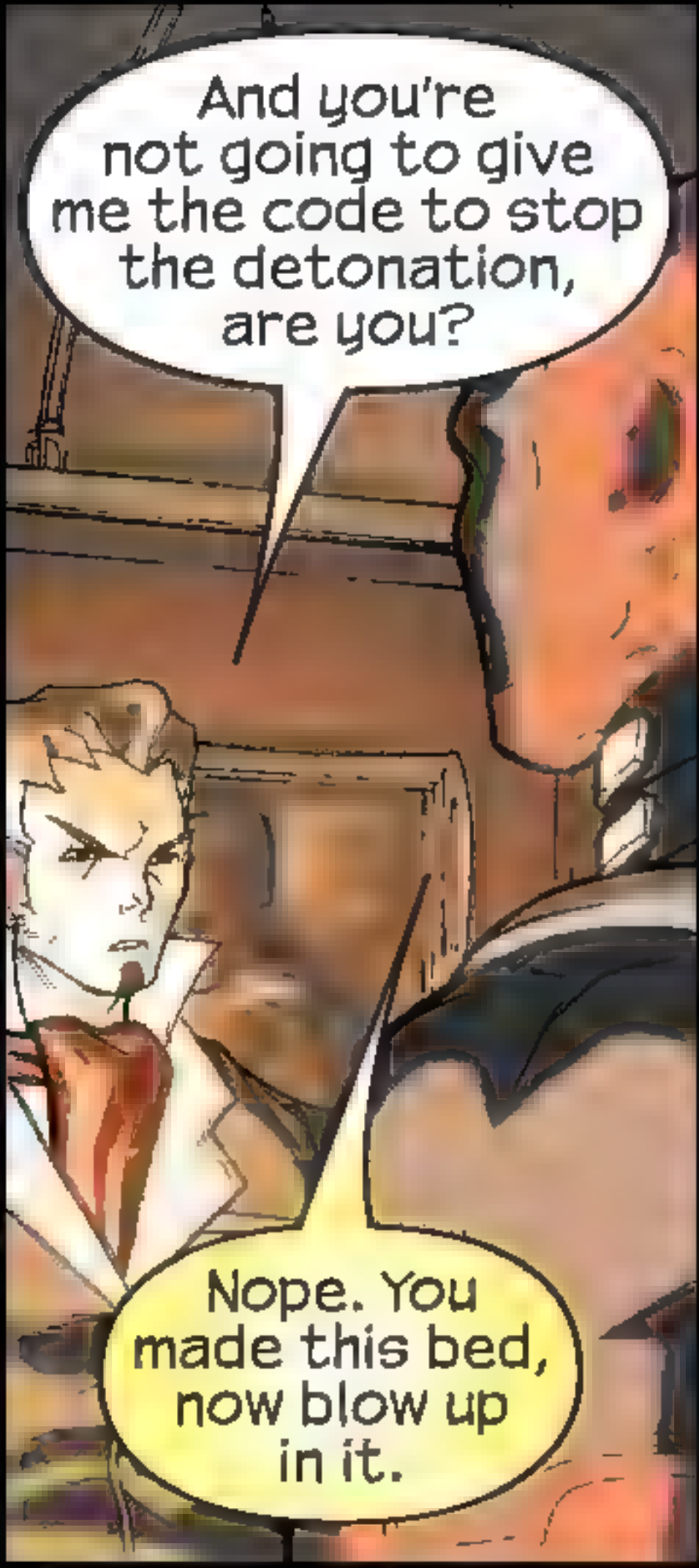


Run!



You can't do that for me, can you?

No. His mind was just miswired. Your data has been erased permanently, and the virus has no antidote.



And you're not going to give me the code to stop the detonation, are you?

Nope. You made this bed, now blow up in it.



I suppose I'll have to try to find it in that creaking Ferris wheel you call a mind, then.

Yipee-ki-yay, peanut butter.



En Garde, Herr Wilson.

Up yours, Pirate Pete.



Give me the code, Wilson. If I defeat you, I may just get out of the castle in time--

--and that would be very unfortunate for your friends' futures.



He's distracting me... he's in my mind--I can *feel* him, digging around in there.

Guess... ~~hunné~~...I'd better *keep* you here then, huh?

What a perfect time to find out that this guy is actually a great swordsman. Like I didn't hate him *enough*.

Maybe if my brain wasn't toasted lightly--but I can't beat him at sword-play. Not now.



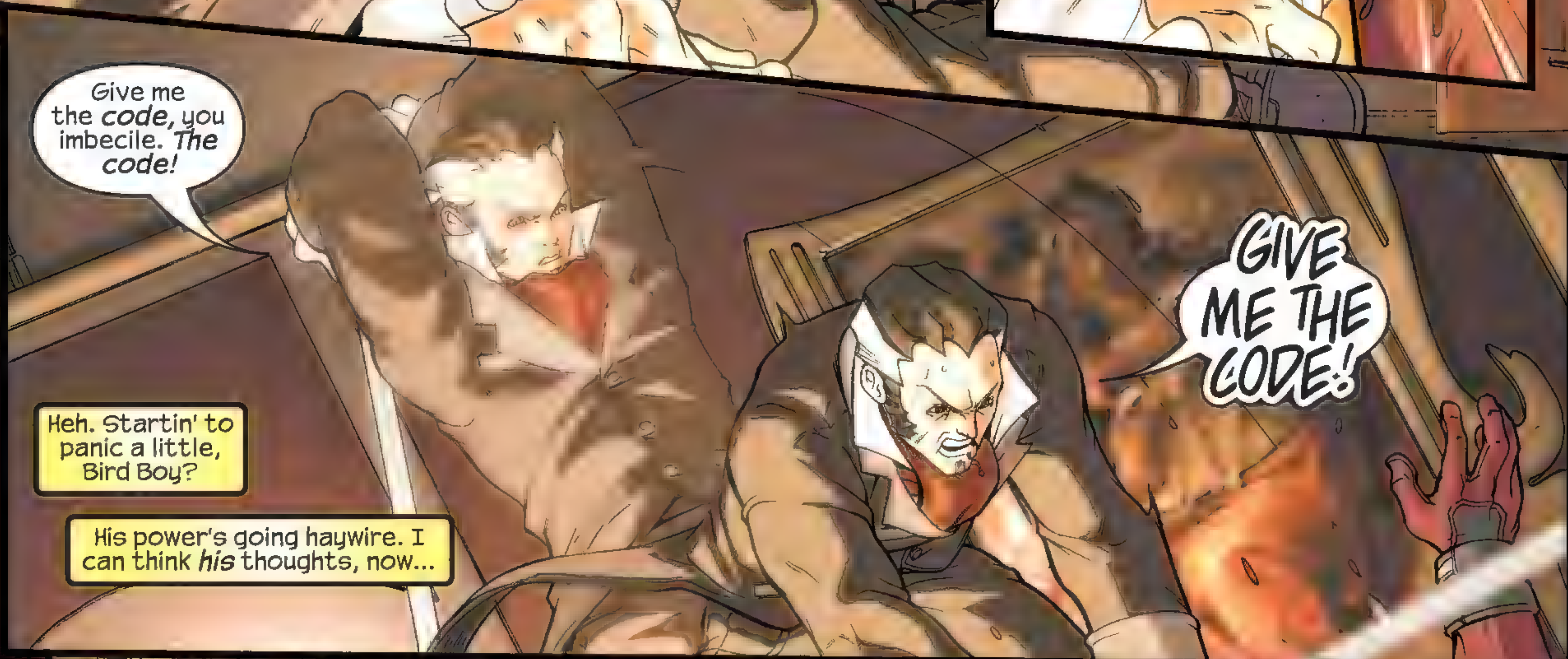
Uhhh...

Know who taught me this? Batroc the Leaper. Great guy, bad goatee. Bad outfit, too. Also smelly.



Oops. You know, I *told* Ratbag not to pee there, but he just couldn't wait. *Bad Ratbag! Bad!*

Hey, no one said *stabbing* was allowed!



Give me the *code*, you imbecile. *The code!*

Heh. Startin' to panic a little, Bird Boy?

His power's going haywire. I can think *his* thoughts, now...

GIVE ME THE CODE!

You got...just under two minutes left, Swan. Know what I think?

I think it's a good thing I can play the harmonica one-handed. Let's have a hoedown!

Swing your partner do-si-do
Marry your cousin,
there you go!

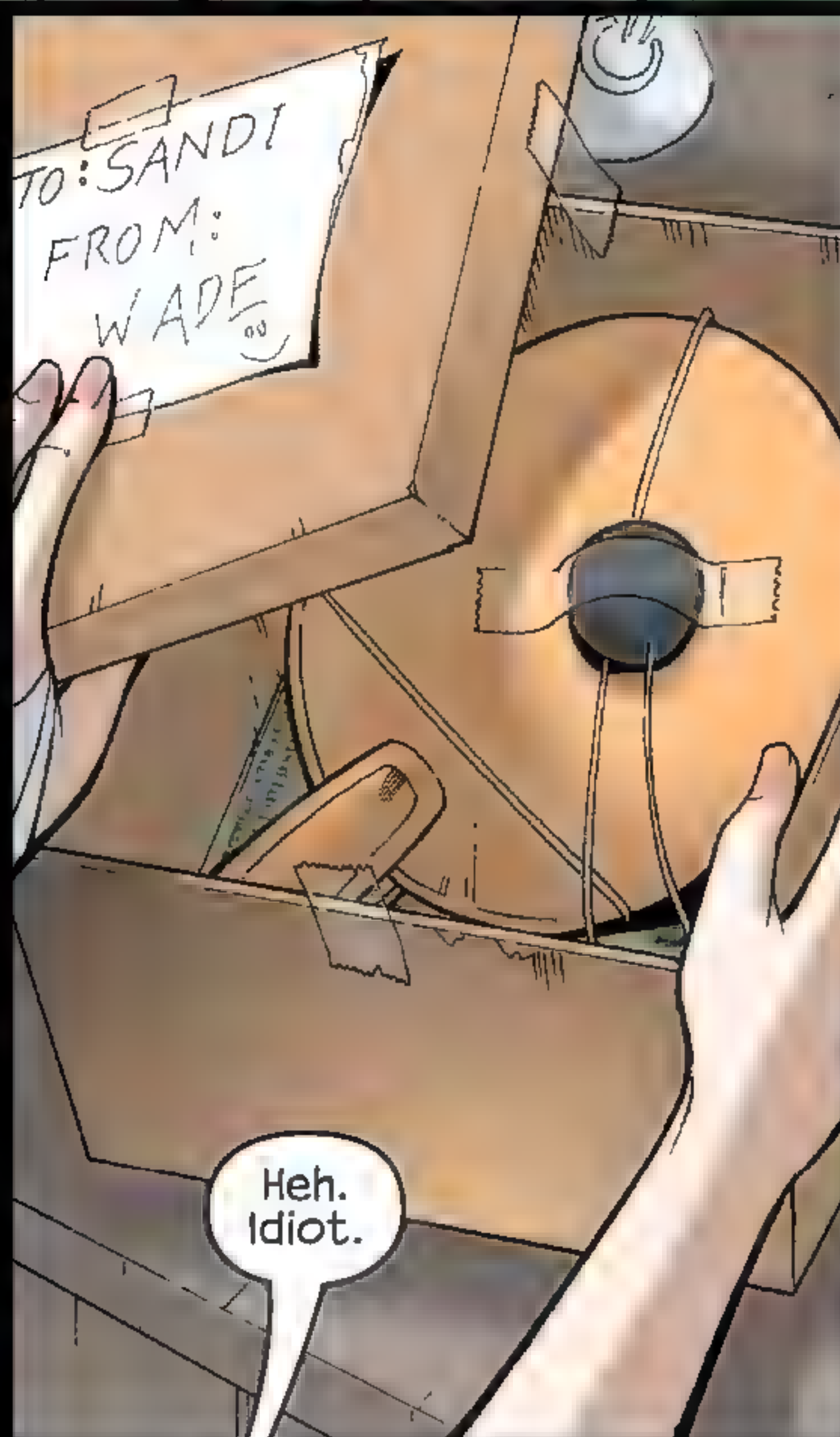
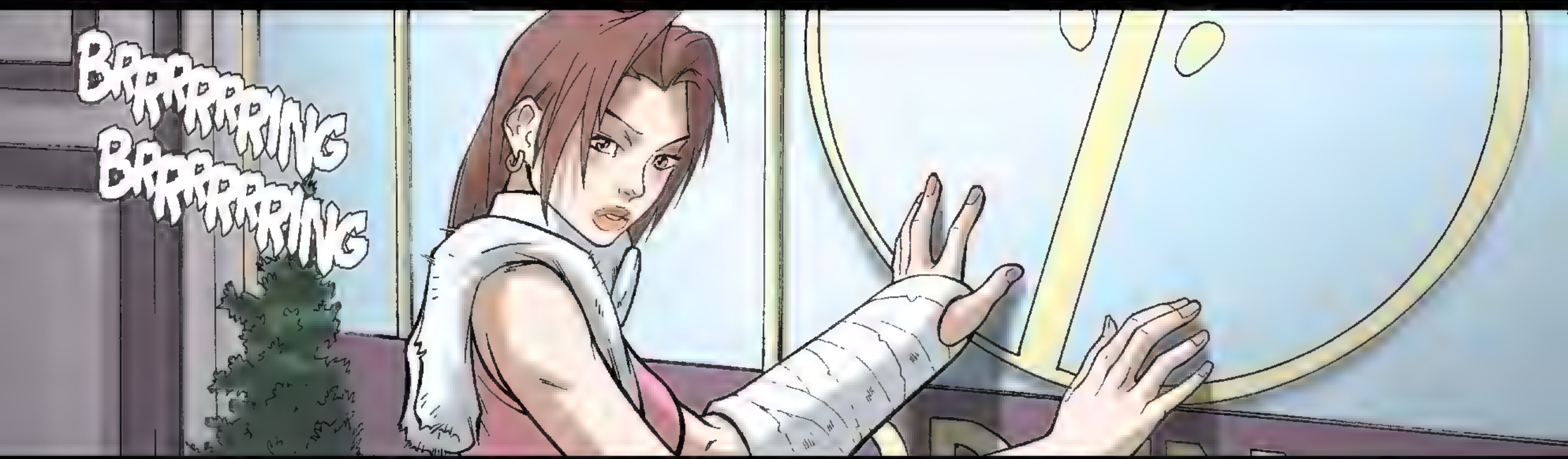
Come on, Mr. Black--
You wanna be in my head so badly?

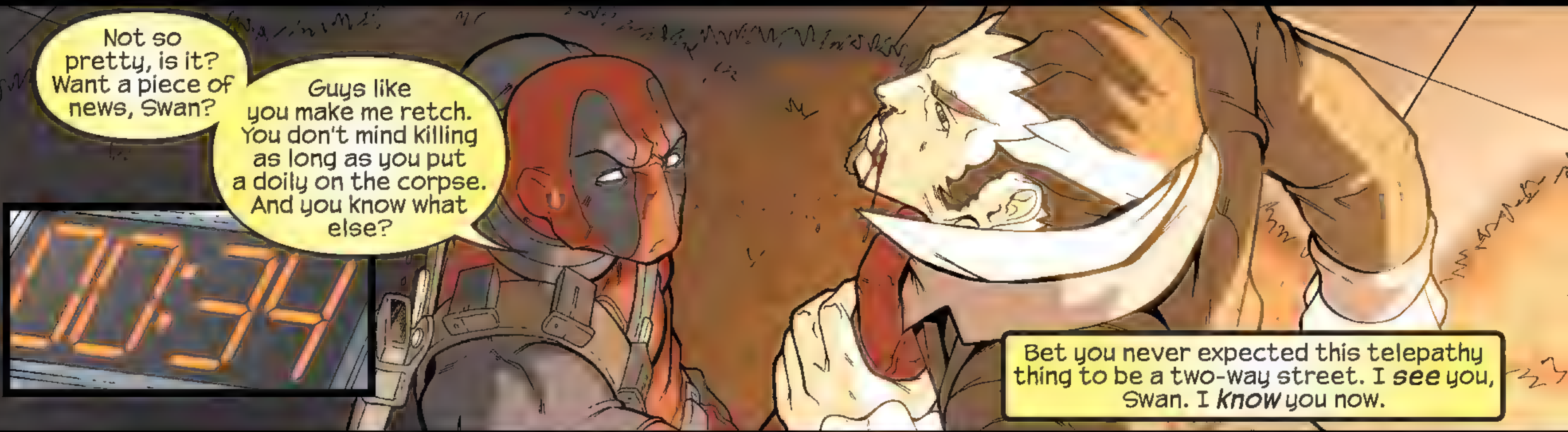
Okay, fine...



WELCOME
TO MY
NIGHTMARE!







Not so pretty, is it? Want a piece of news, Swan?

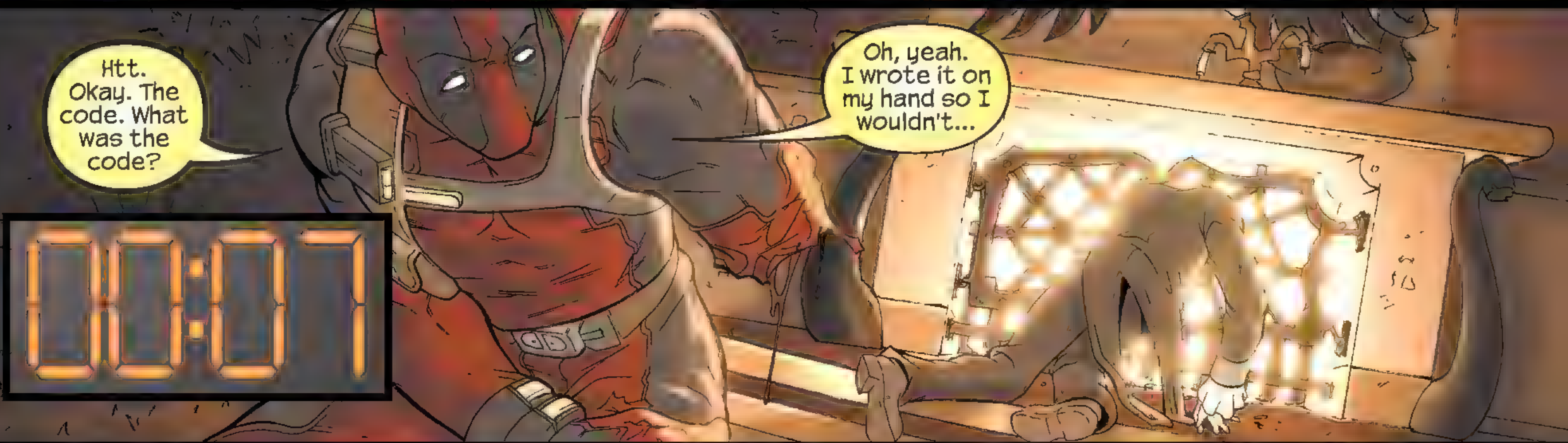
Guys like you make me retch. You don't mind killing as long as you put a doily on the corpse. And you know what else?

Bet you never expected this telepathy thing to be a two-way street. I *see* you, Swan. I *know* you now.



I know you're afraid. And it was *this* ignoble, ill-mannered, brain-sick *commoner* who got the best of you.

Goodbye, you insufferable *snob*.



Htt. Okay. The code. What was the code?

Oh, yeah. I wrote it on my hand so I wouldn't...



...forget. Uh-oh.



Heh. Ha.

HA HA. Wrote it on my hand!



NOW
THAT'S
FUNNY!

HEALING FACTOR: FINALE

CHAPTER THREE

Story by
Gail Simone

Art by UDON with *Arnold Tsang, Andrew Hou,
Eric Vedder, Omar Dogan & TheRealT!*

UDON Asst. Chief
Rhys Yorke

UDON Chief
Erik Ko

Letters by
Dave Sharpe

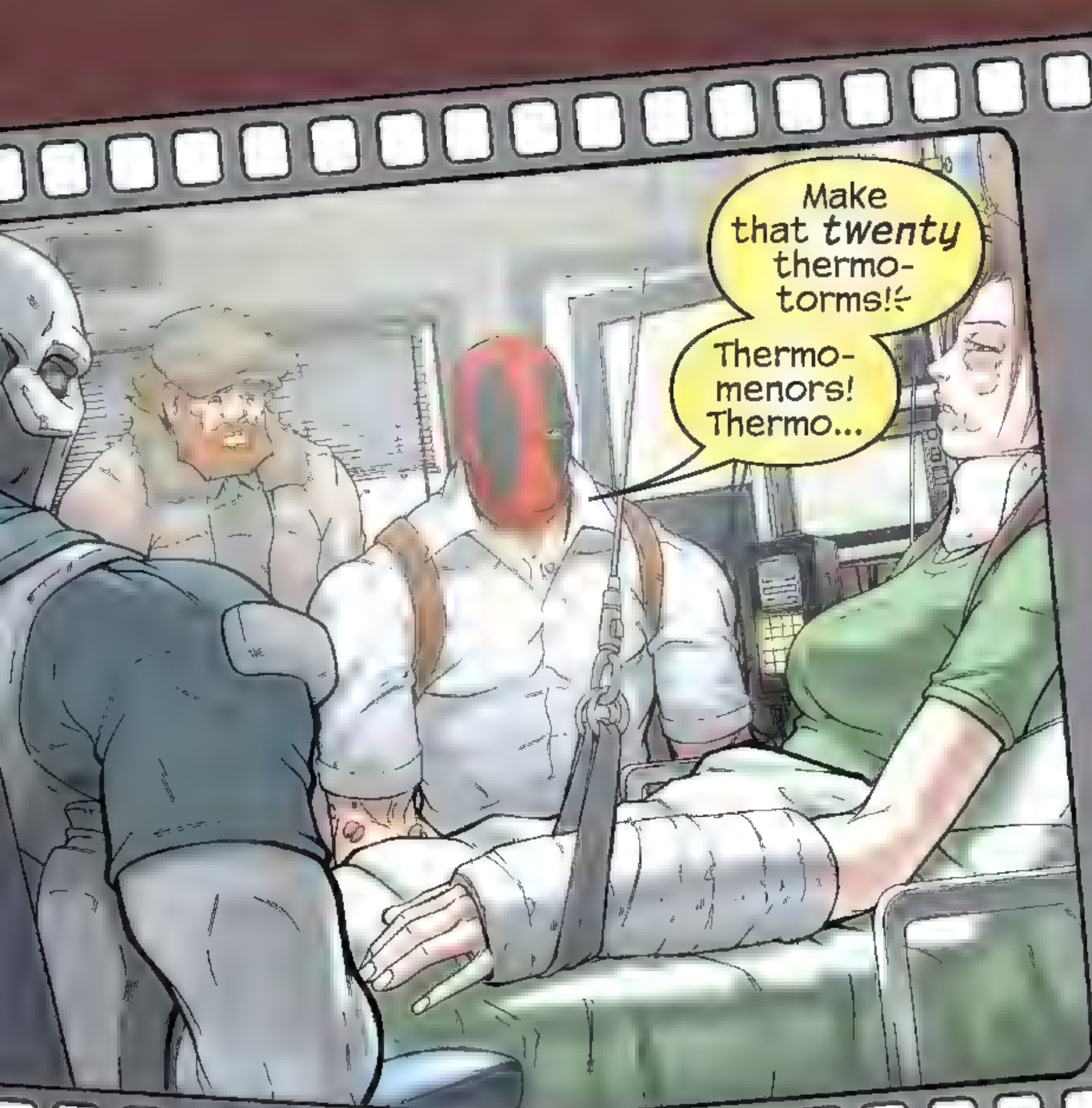
Assisted by
Yoshii & Raicht

Edited by
Lis & Marts

Chief
Joe Quesada

President
Bill Jemas

Dedicated to the creative teams who made Deadpool so messed-up and entertaining, and to the loyal readers who kept Wade going when Speedball only lasted about an issue and a half.



Make that *twenty* thermoforms!~

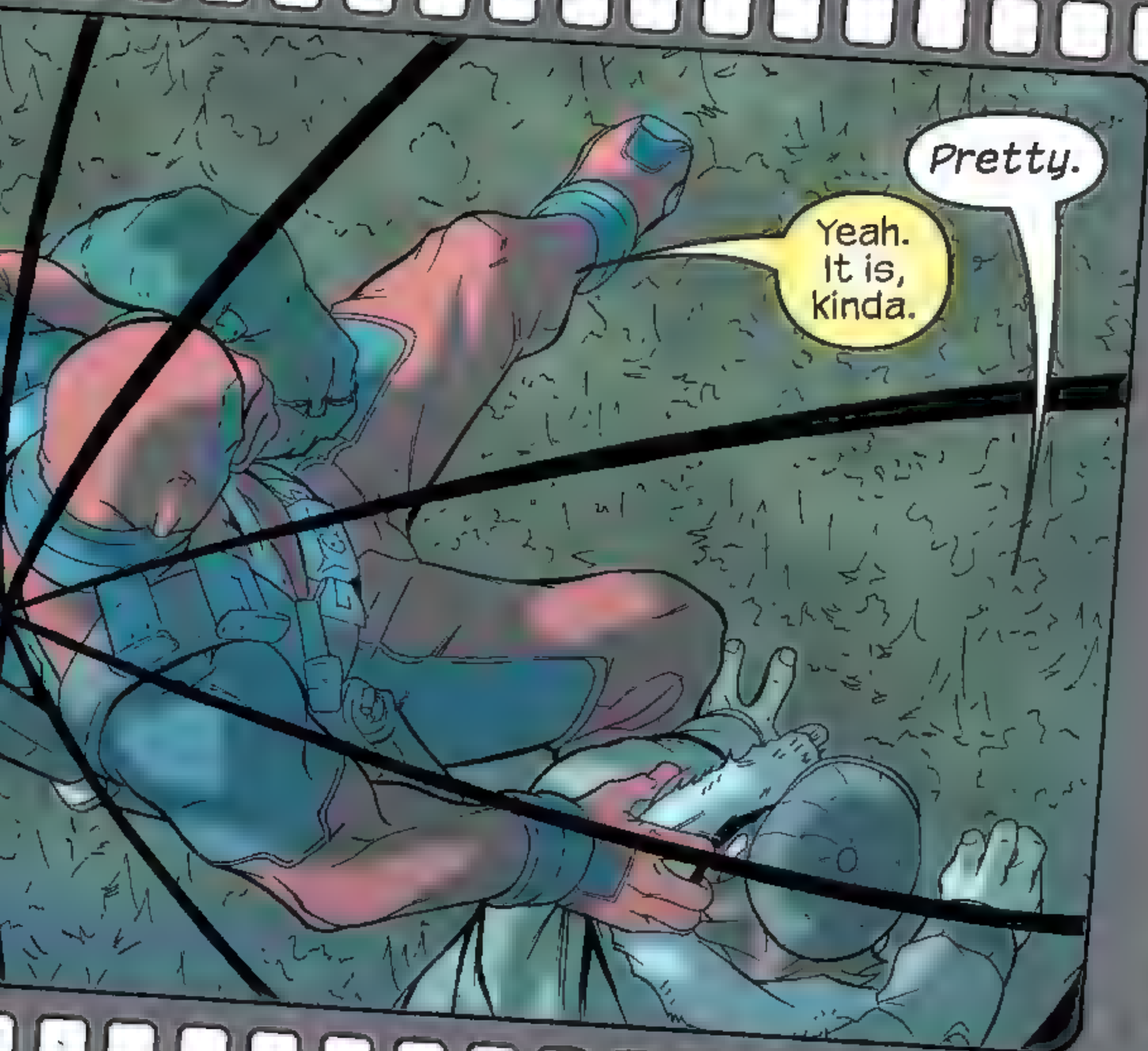
Thermo-menors! Thermo...



For god's sake, Wade-- I thought you were a *professional*.

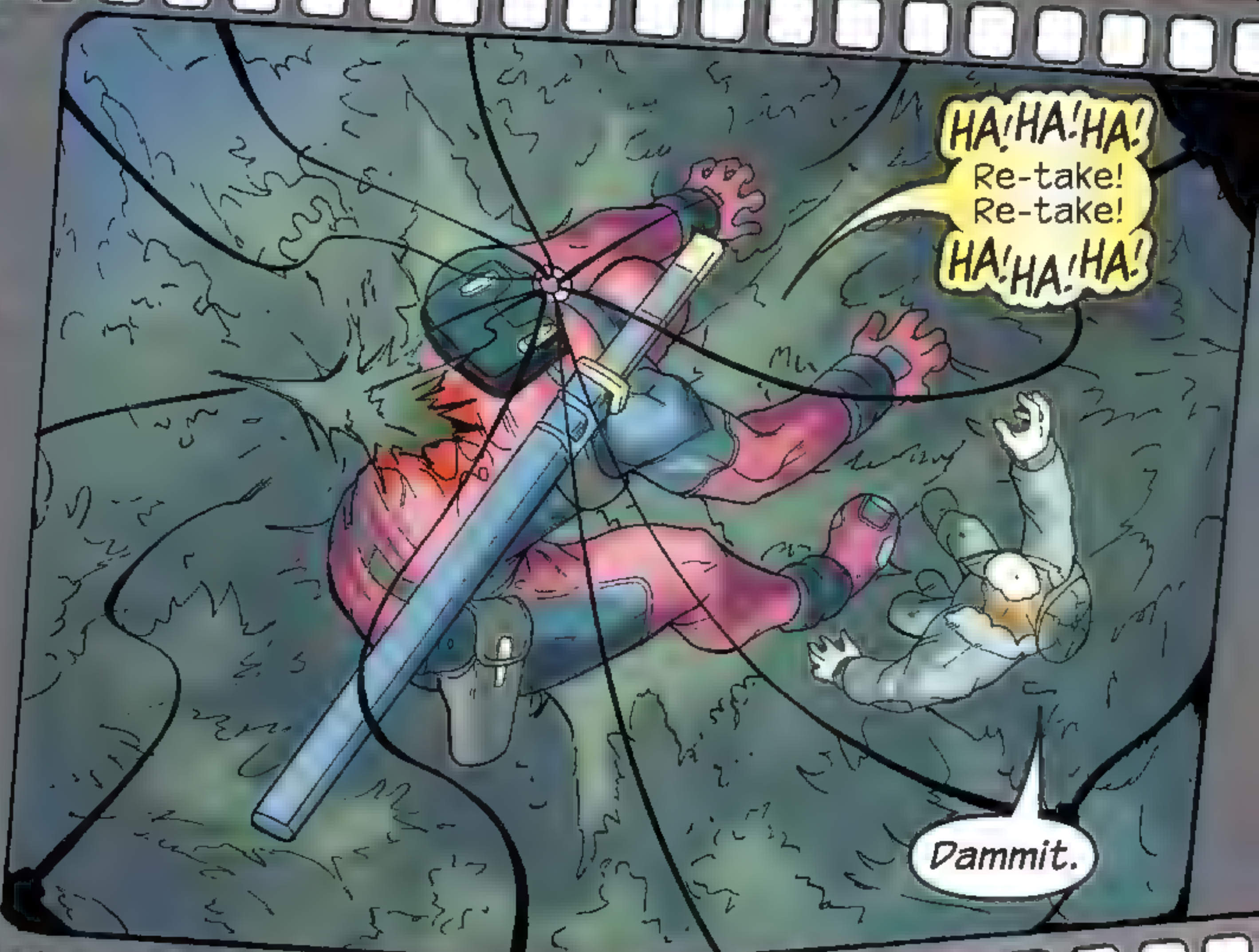
HA! HA! HA! I can't say, "Ther-MORTIMER!" HA! HA! HA!

My cast itches.



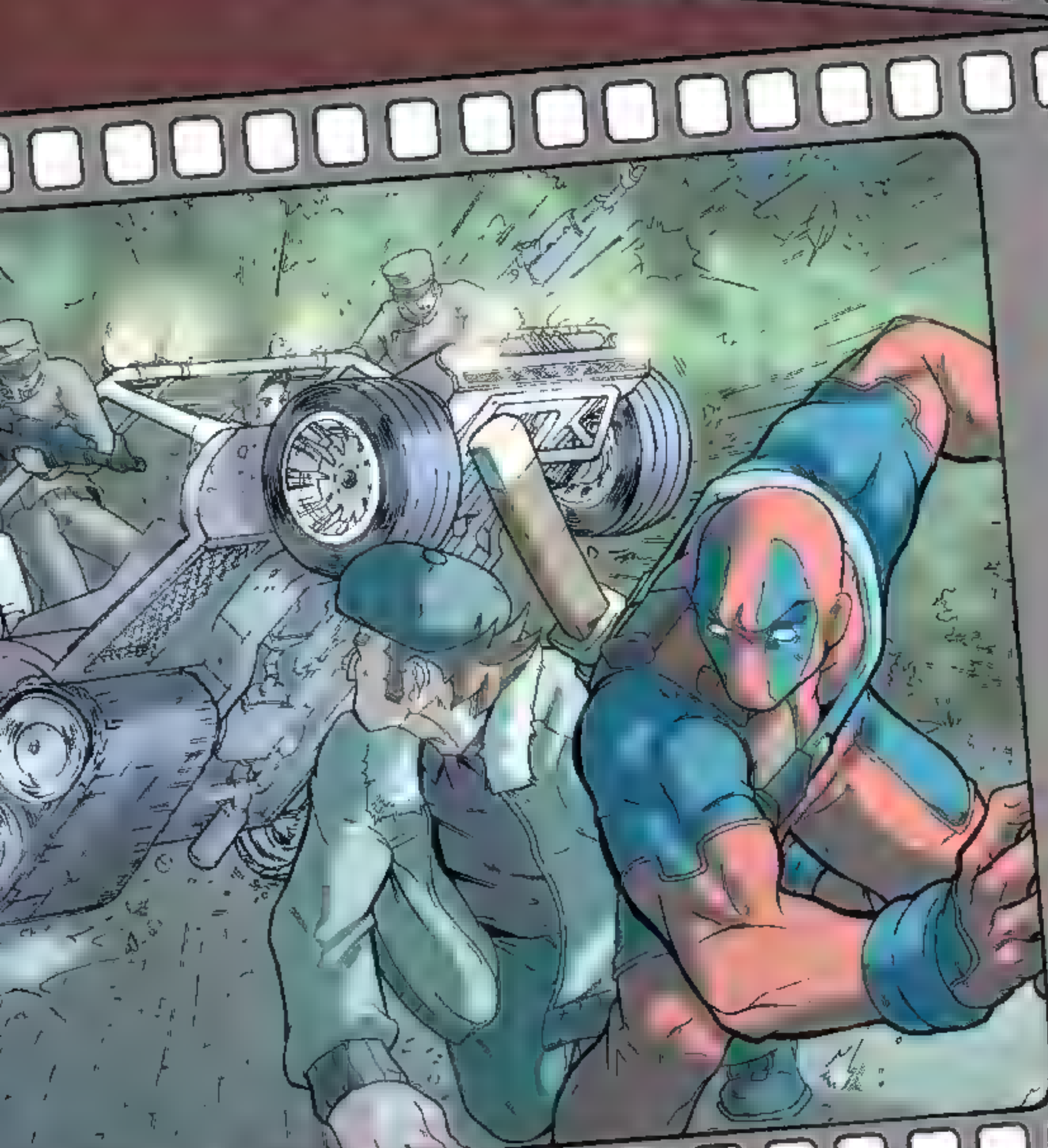
Pretty.

Yeah. It is, kinda.



HA! HA! HA! Re-take! Re-take! HA! HA! HA!

Dammit.



HA! HA! HA! Nice driving, there, Mario!

That's it, call my agent! And an ambulance. And someone look for my liver!

Th-th-th-th-GO HOME, FOLKS!

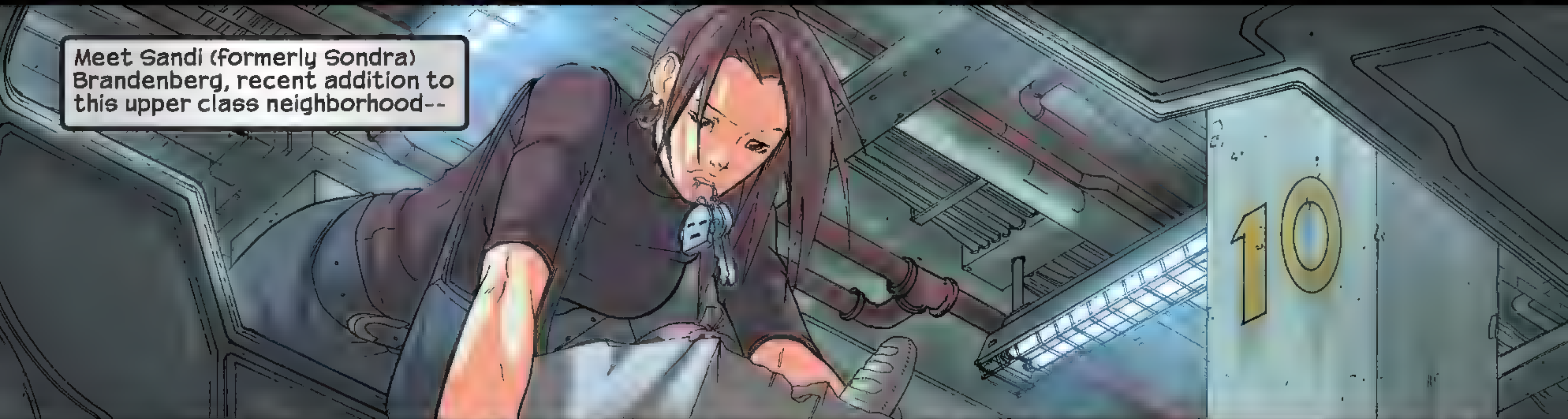
NOT THE END!

JOIN GAIL, UDON, DAVE ET AL IN TWO WEEKS FOR--

AGENT X

SIMONE ■ LEE ■ UDON AGENT X 1





Meet Sandi (formerly Sondra) Brandenburg, recent addition to this upper class neighborhood--

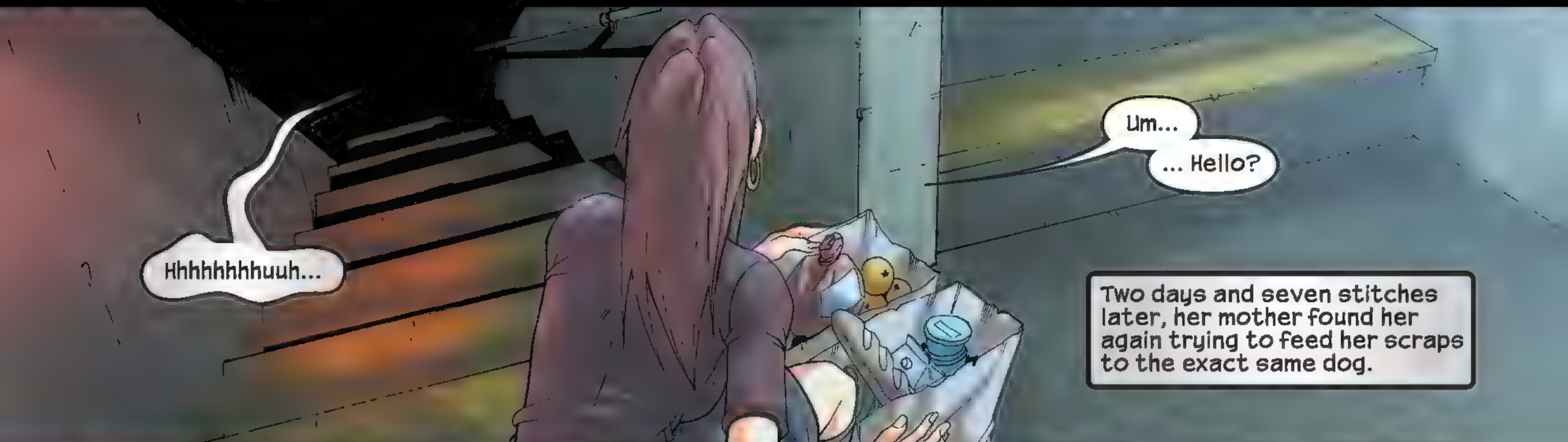


--when Sandi was five, she saved her snack time graham crackers to feed a starving dog that lived in the woods behind her Ohio home.

Sttttaaa...



The dog promptly ate her crackers, and bit her hand bloody.

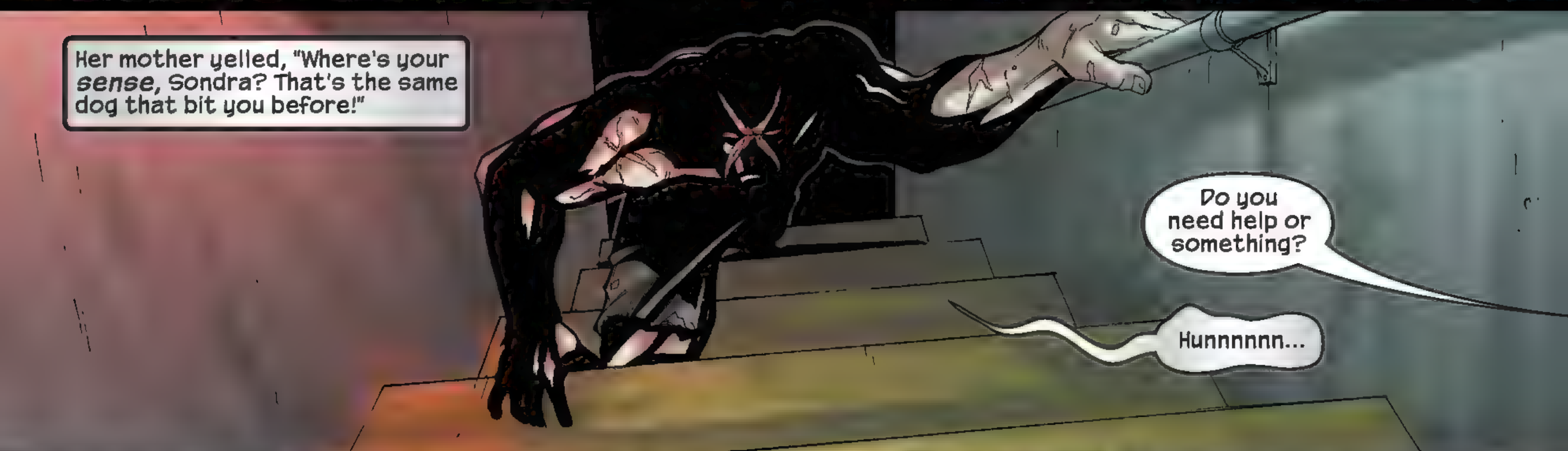


Hhhhhhhhhuuh...

Um...

... Hello?

Two days and seven stitches later, her mother found her again trying to feed her scraps to the exact same dog.



Her mother yelled, "Where's your *sense*, Sondra? That's the same dog that bit you before!"

Do you need help or something?

Hunnnnnnn...

DEAD MAN'S SWITCH

PART 1

Sandi replied, calmly, "But Mother--"

"He *knows* me now."

Huunnnggr-yyyyyyy..

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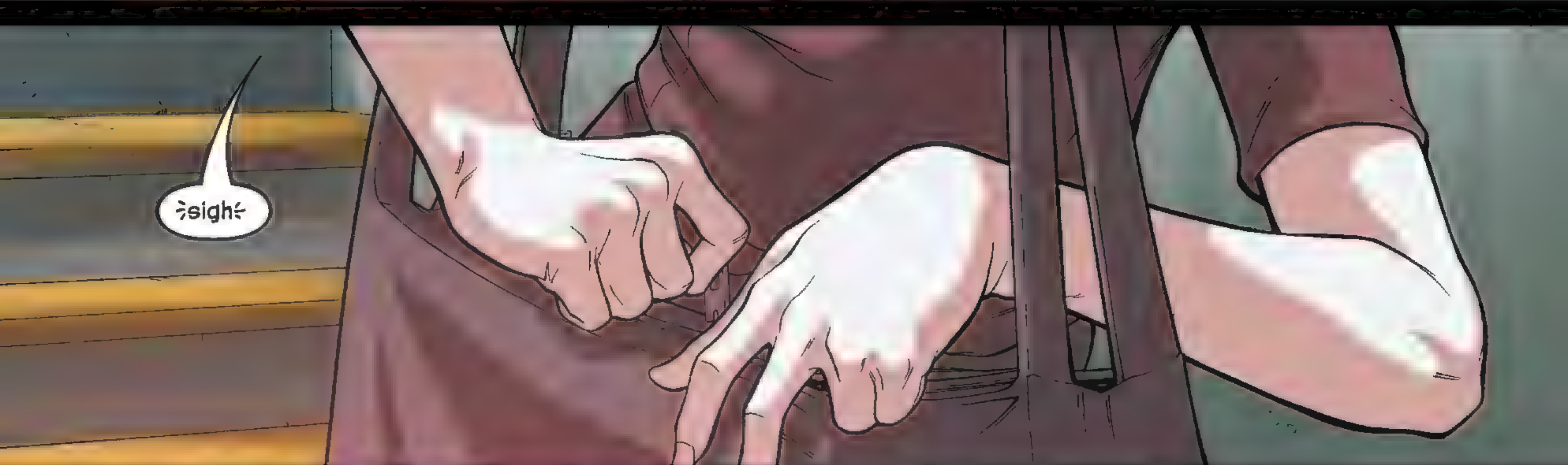
Chief
Joe Quesada

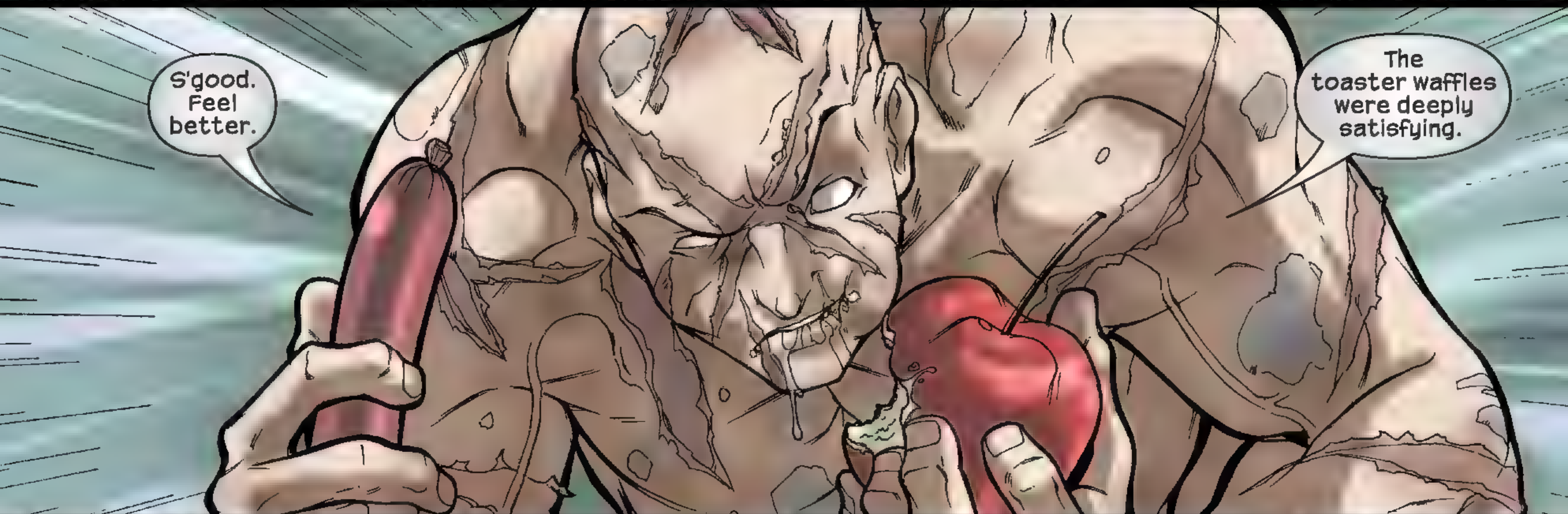
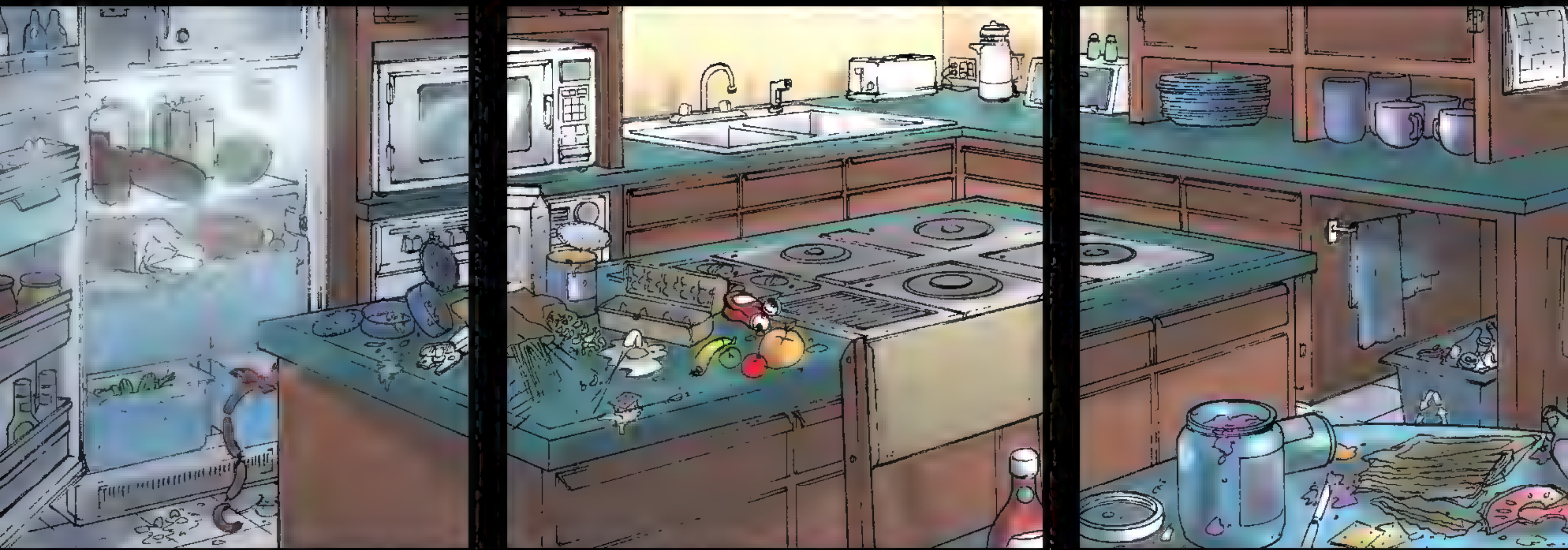
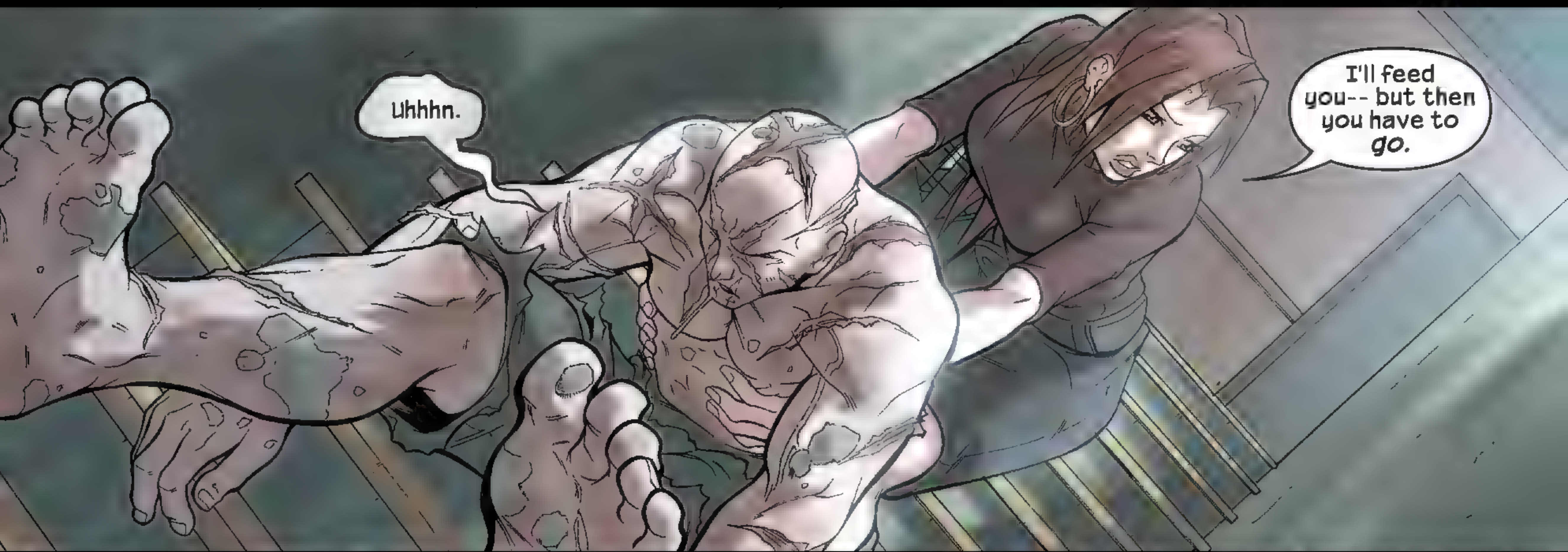
President
Bill Jemas

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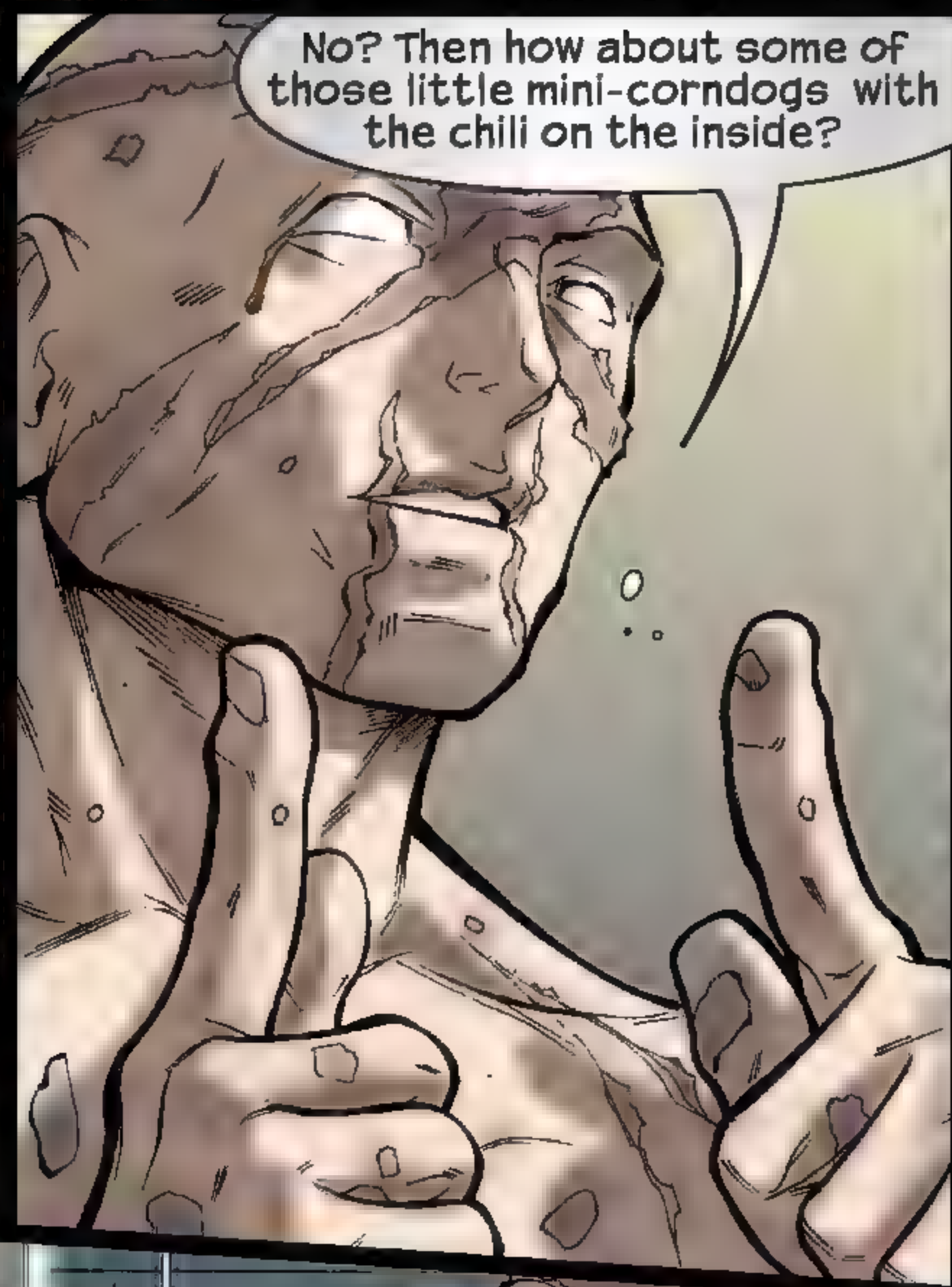
I'm hoping she's still got some pity to spare.







Hey, do you happen to have any potato and fennel-crusted Chilean sea bass?



No? Then how about some of those little mini-corn dogs with the chili on the inside?



Yeah, some of those mini-corn dogs would go down smooth. The chili is already inside. Man, that'd be sweet, some of those.

You're crying blood.



I am?

Pretty neat trick, since I haven't been able to detect my own pulse for ten minutes now.



Whoa, that ain't right.



Uh...I'm sorry about the mess. I'll go now. I don't know what I was thinking coming here.

Wait...



...who are you? What's your *name*? Do I know you?

Don't know, don't know, and don't think so.

But I know you. I know all about you, I'm pretty sure.



You remind me of... does the name "Wade Wilson" ring a bell?

I...
...huh. Bleeding again.



This is actually pretty painful. Hey, ever have one of those not-so-fresh ocular days?

Sit down before you fall down.



You can have these. They belonged to my last boyfriend.

If I throw up, I'll aim for the planter.

That's a sign of good breeding.



Ptoo! Ptui! Scat! Scram! Infernal feline....!

FLURRRRR

Now. What exactly is it that you *want*?



I want to be a mercenary. The best there's ever been.

And I need your help.

Kenichi Building,
twenty miles away...

Forgive me,
Higashi-sama.
It is time.

Do you
believe the
dead are aware
of our actions,
Saguri?

Respectfully,
Higashi-sama--

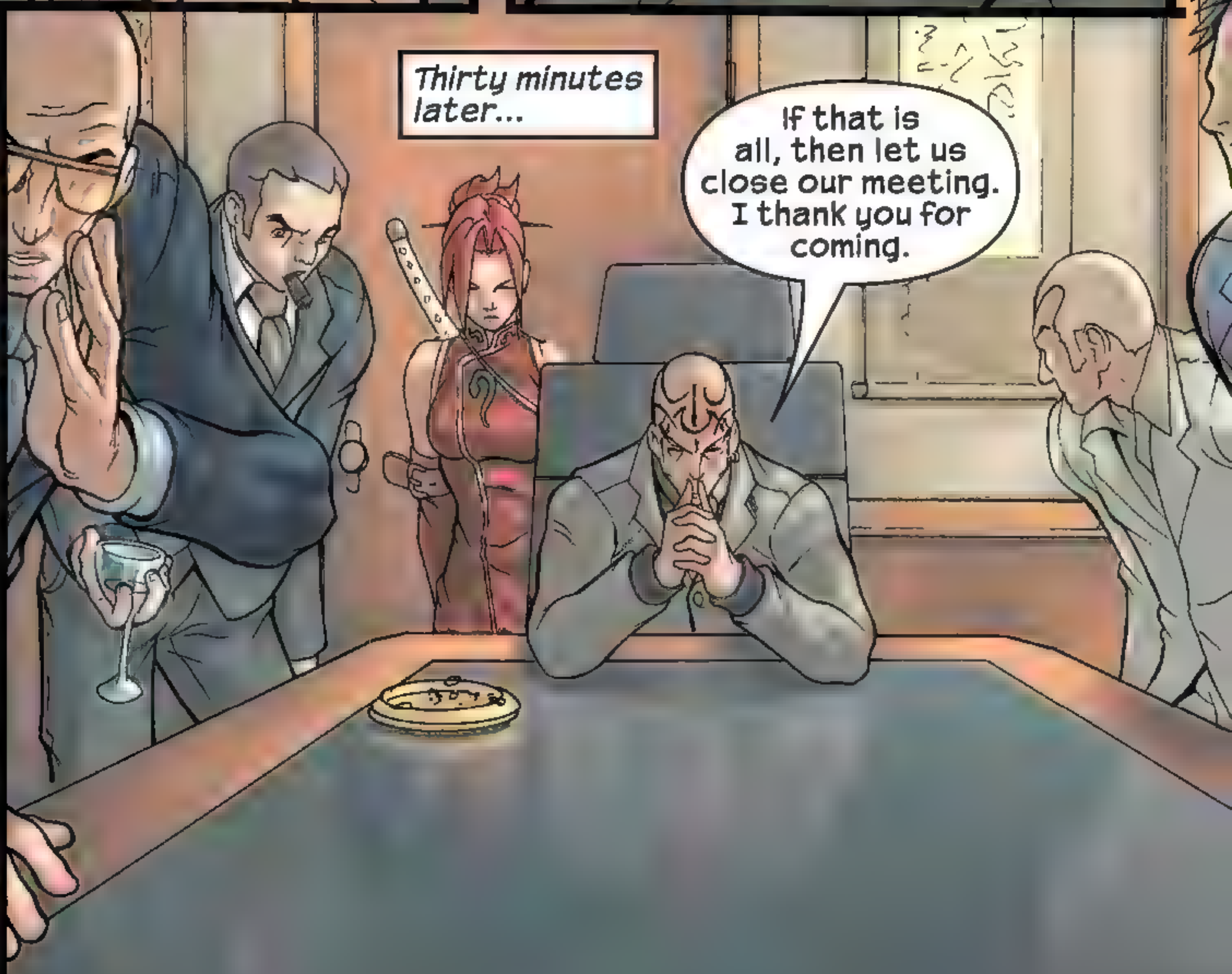
--I believe
you were made
our new Lord based
on the wishes of our
Lady, the former
Eastern Wind. And
when she died, the
strength of our
organization died
with her.

I believe the
underbosses see
you as weak and
frightened. I believe
that I will soon be
given an envelope,
and inside will be your
name, and then you'll
be able to speak
to the dead
directly.

That
is what I
believe.

Respectfully.

Let's
get this
finished.

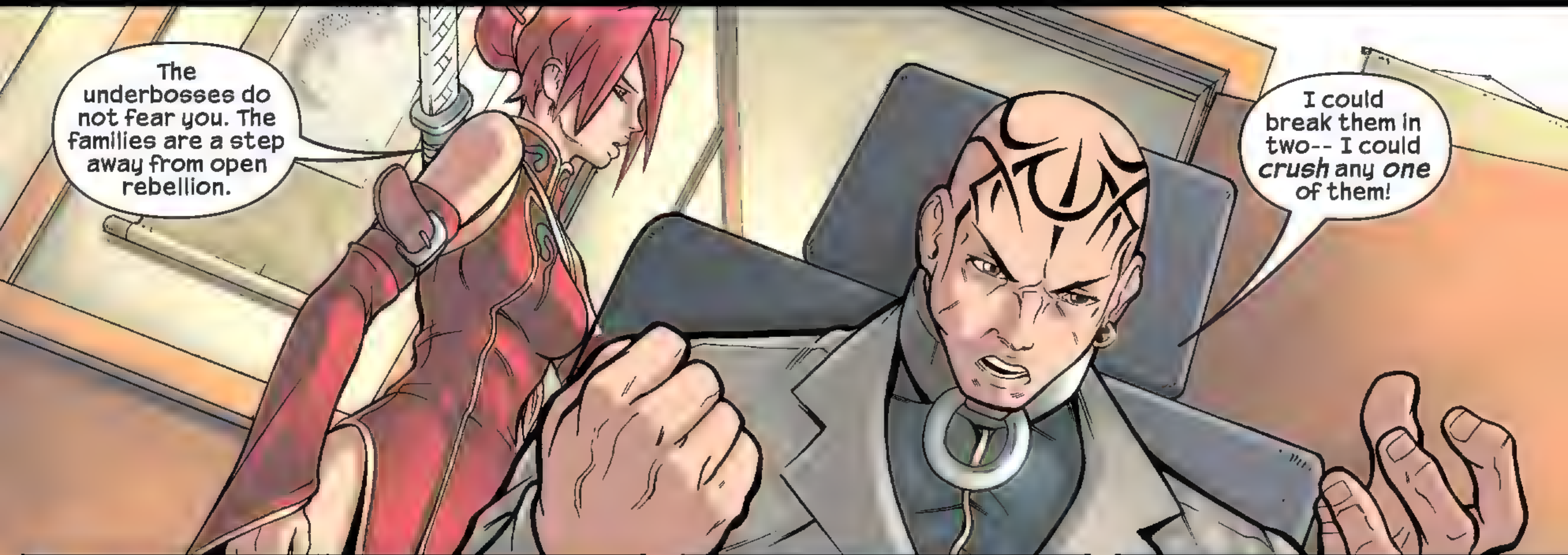




Weak-minded, overmuscled fool...

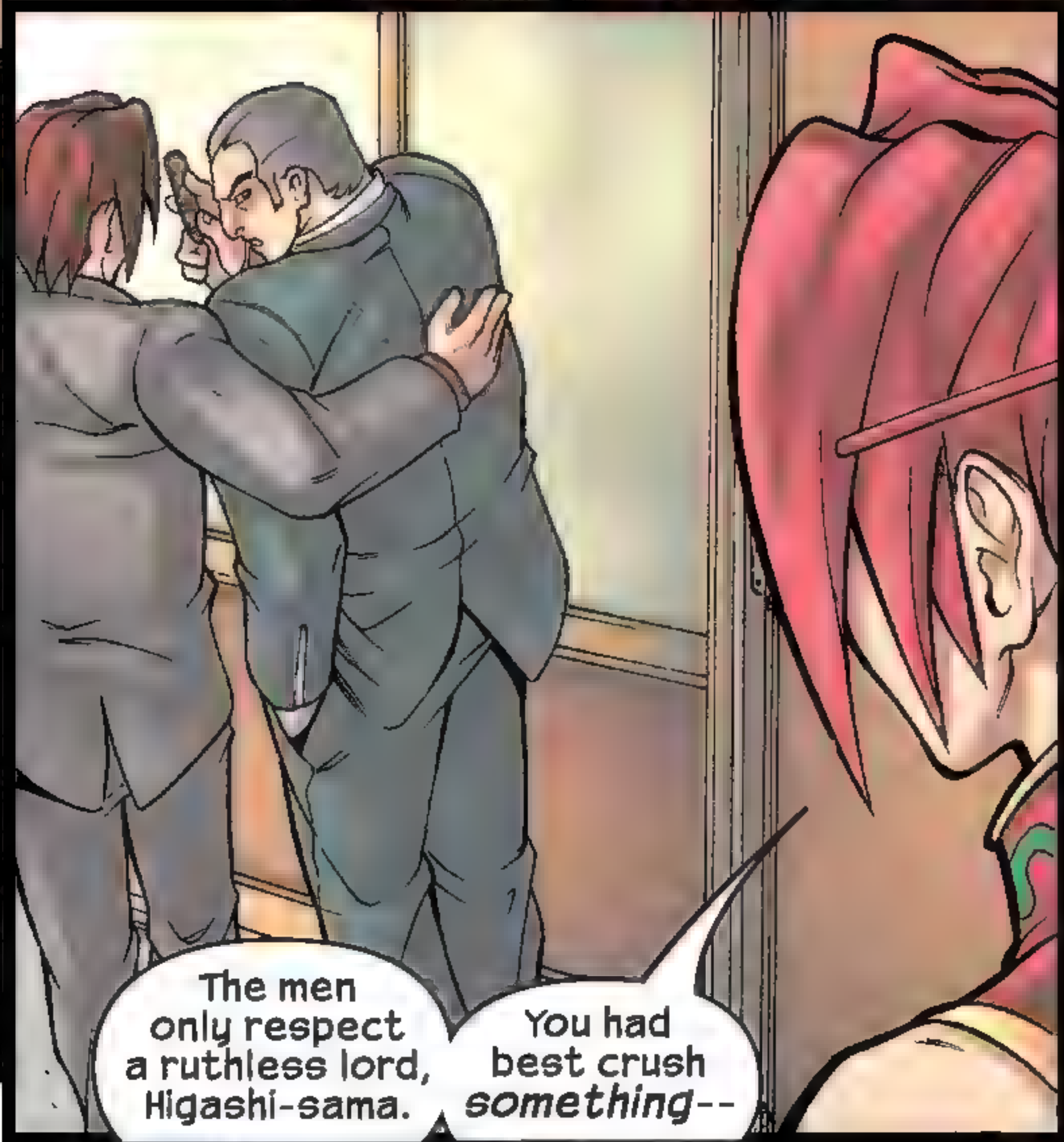
...taking orders from a degraded child.

Not forever. Patience.



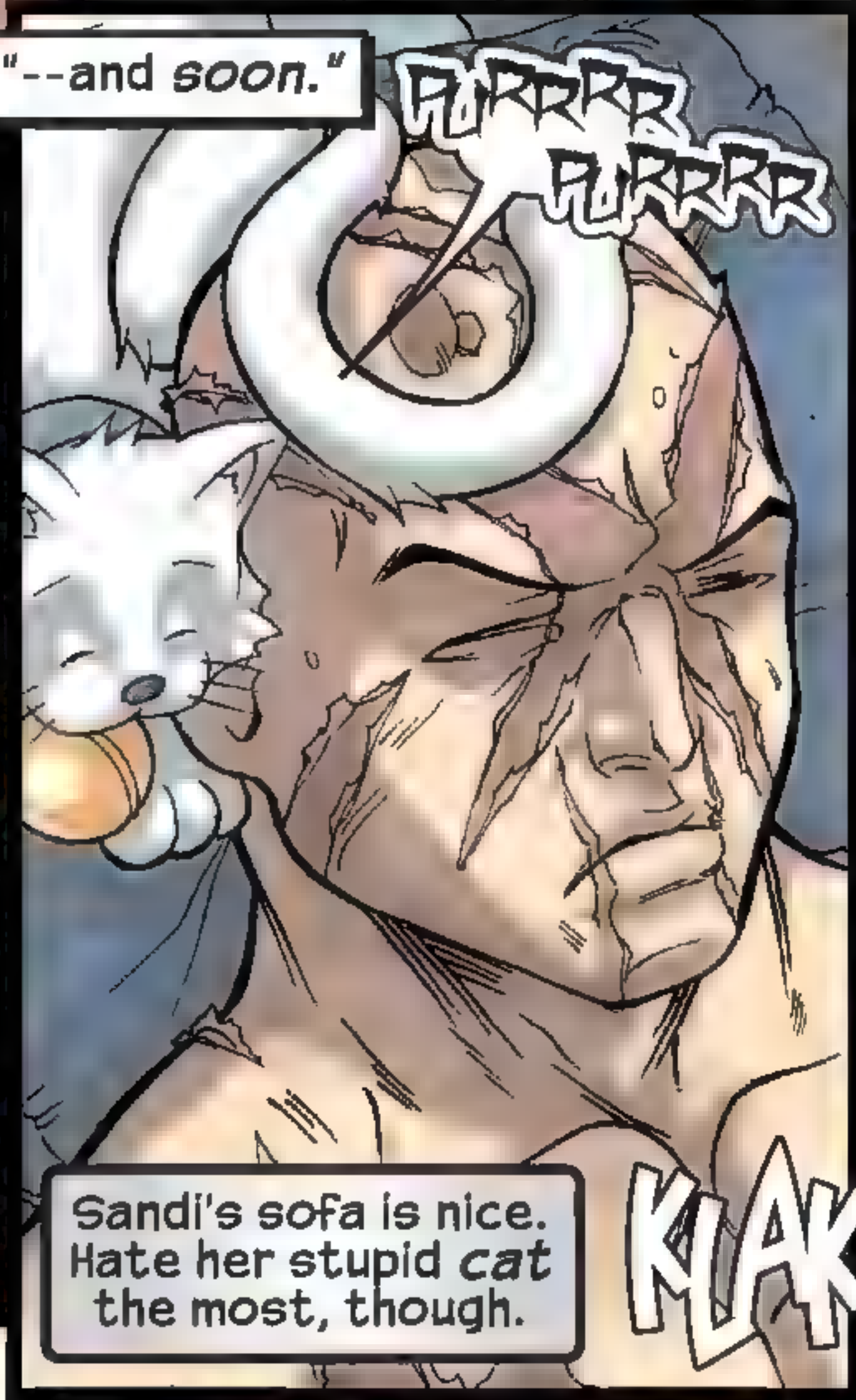
The underbosses do not fear you. The families are a step away from open rebellion.

I could break them in two-- I could *crush* any one of them!



The men only respect a ruthless lord, Higashi-sama.

You had best crush *something*--



"--and soon."

FURRRR FURRRR

Sandi's sofa is nice. Hate her stupid cat the most, though.

KLAK



KKT

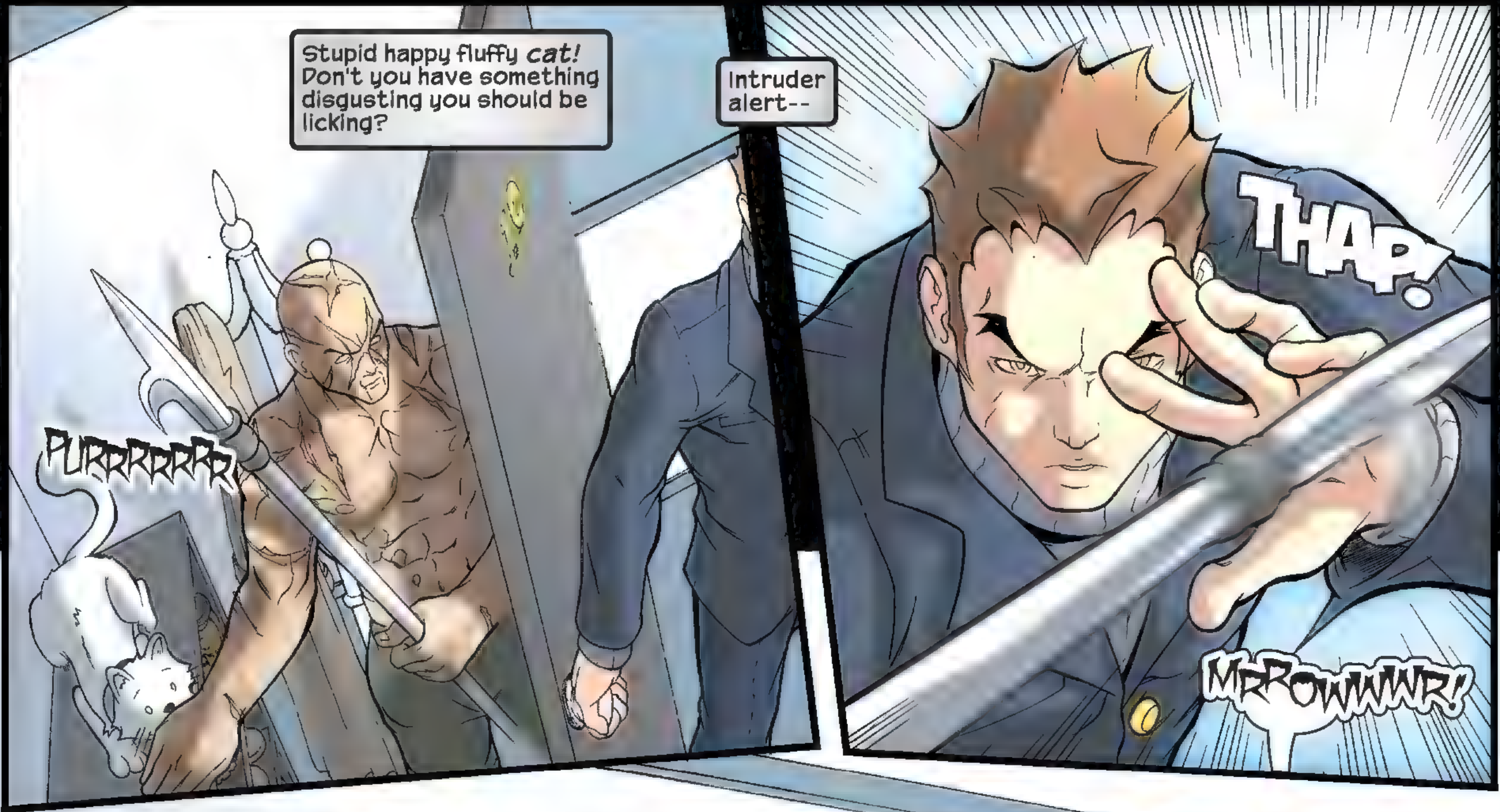
What the hell was that?

MROOOWR!



Stupid happy fluffy *cat*!
Don't you have something
disgusting you should be
licking?

Intruder
alert--



Uh-oh. Who's *this*
slice of ugly?

Maybe he's the world's
oddest Jehovah's Witness?





You better pray you didn't do anything to Sandi, mister!

I should warn you that I'm *weak* and *feeble* right now, so *back off* or I can't guarantee I won't *puke*!

Task-master, Don't!



That's my new *partner*. He's a *merc*.

He's just a little *confused* right now. Okay, a *lot* confused.

Well, probably more confused because of your image inducer.



Taskmaster, this is...well, we're calling him Alex.

»kaff«
Alex Hayden, charmed, for real, dude.

Sandi, don't be stupid. This guy's a merc? How come I never heard of him? And why do you insist on bringing in *strays*?



Don't call me stupid, Tony.



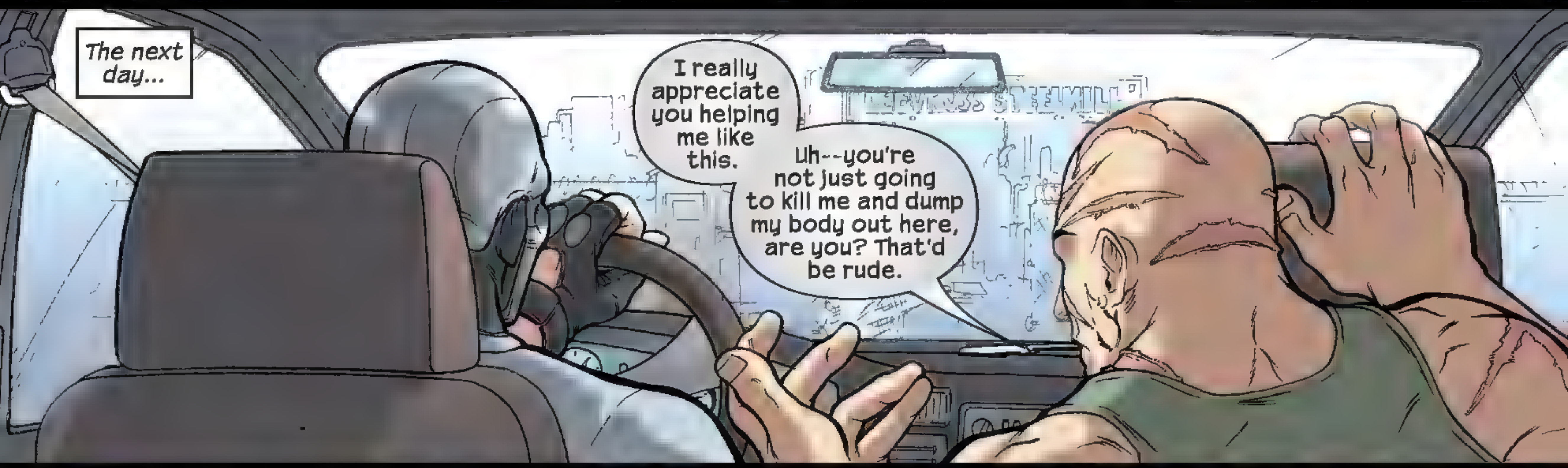
See? He can take it.

He's going to be a merc, and *we* are going to *help* him.



"We?"

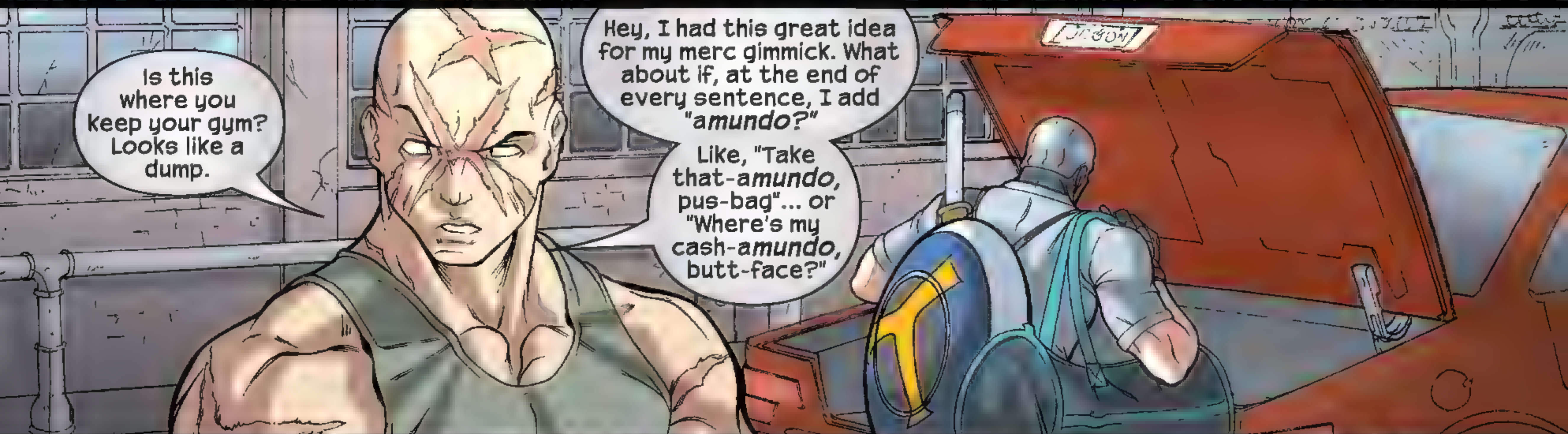
Hey, I'm not gonna pretend it doesn't *sting* a little...



The next day...

I really appreciate you helping me like this.

Uh--you're not just going to kill me and dump my body out here, are you? That'd be rude.



Is this where you keep your gym? Looks like a dump.

Hey, I had this great idea for my merc gimmick. What about if, at the end of every sentence, I add "amundo?"

Like, "Take that-amundo, pus-bag"... or "Where's my cash-amundo, butt-face?"

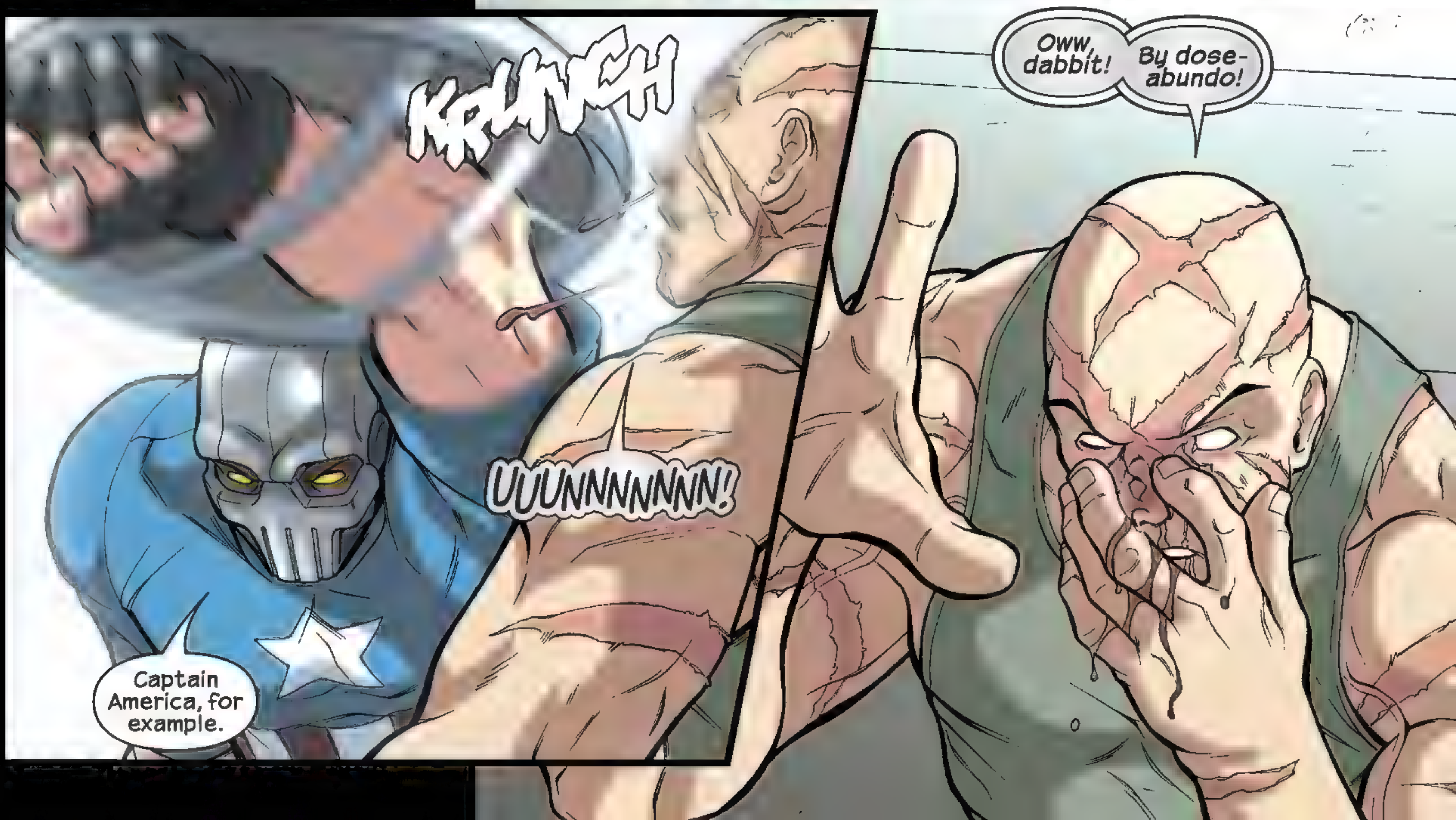


For Sandi's sake, I agreed to train you, 'Hayden,' not to listen to you. So shut up.

You say you've got a healing factor, so I'm not pulling any punches here.

Each of these shirts represents a person's fighting style. When I put one on, you can consider me that person and respond accordingly.

Coolamundo. This'll be fu...



KRUNCH

UUUNNNNNNN!

Oww, dabbit!

By dose-abundo!

Captain America, for example.



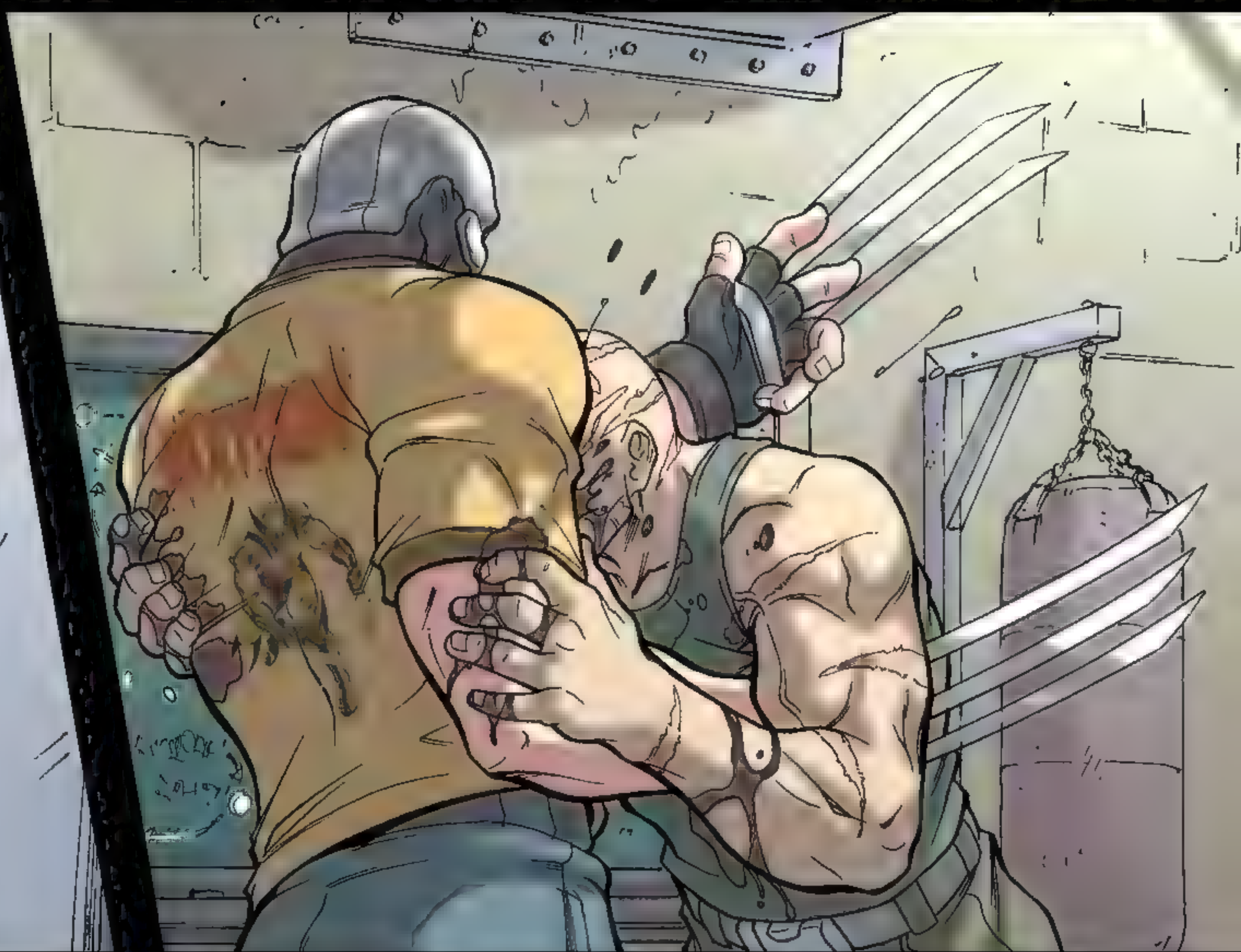
TRAINING: DAY ONE

SANDI SUGGESTS KEEPING TRAINING JOURNAL—CLARIFY THOUGHTS. FEEL CONFIDENT THIS IS GOING TO WORK. TASKMASTER HAS INCREDIBLE ABILITY; IF HE SEES ANYONE DO SOMETHING, NO MATTER HOW COMPLICATED, CAN DUPLICATE IT EXACTLY. WAY, LIKE BEING TRAINED BY CAPTAIN AMERICA, SPIDER-MAN, MANY OTHERS. CAN'T PAY FOR THIS KIND OF EXPERIENCE. HAS GREAT SCHEDULE, WHERE TM BEATS ME UP FOR HALF AN HOUR AS DIFFERENT PERSON EACH TIME, AND BEST PART IS, AFTER EACH SESSION, GET FULL HOUR TO HEAL! AM SURE WILL GET TO HIT BACK AT SOME POINT.

TRAINING: DAY TWO

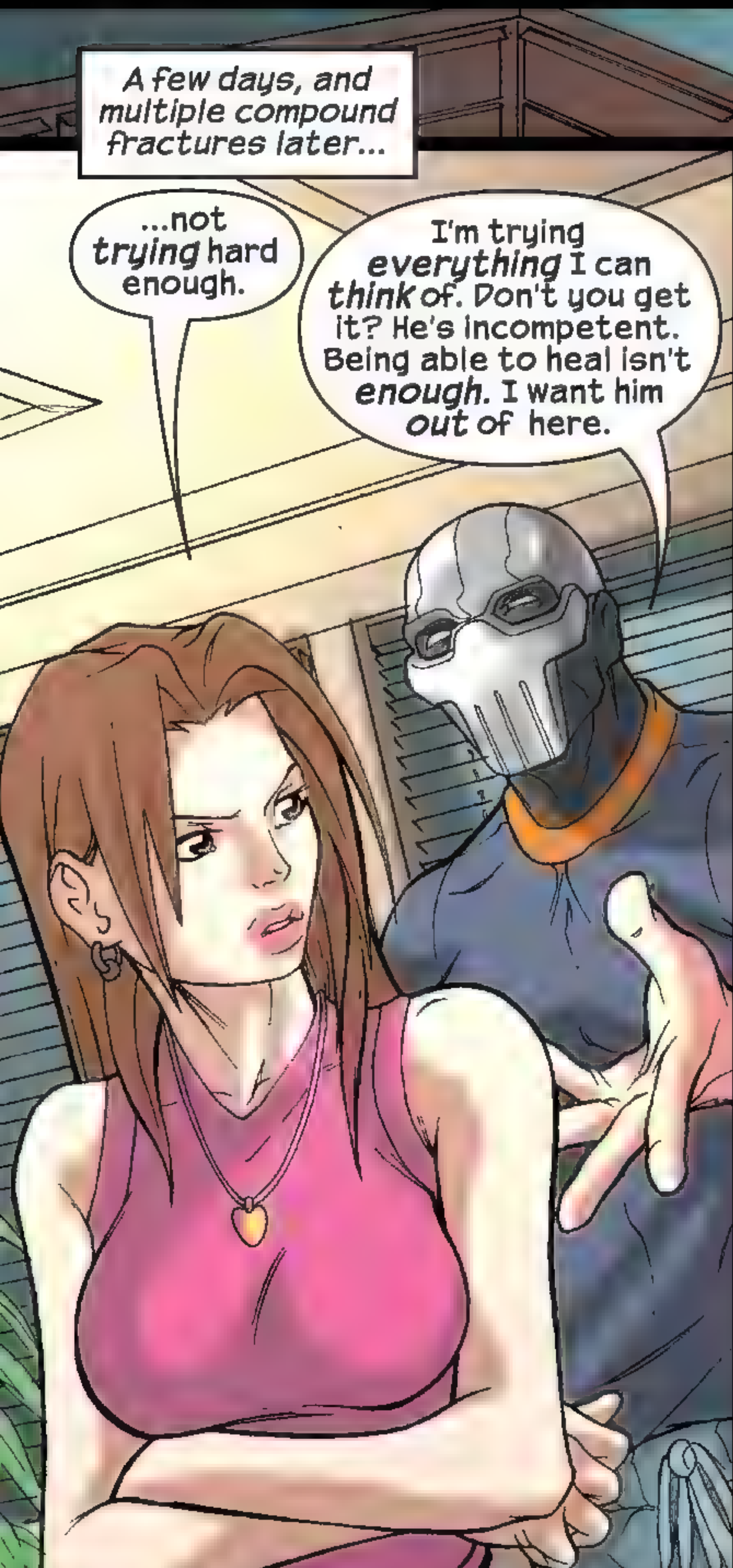
HA HA HA! OUTSMARTED TASKMASTER TODAY! HA HA HA! WAS HURTING ME VERY BADLY AS WOLVERINE. HOUR OF HEALING TOTALLY INSUFFICIENT! TASKMASTER UNCONCERNED WITH MULTIPLE GRIEVOUS WOUNDS INFLICTED ON ME. SO, CAME UP WITH CUNNING PLAN-AMUNDO! BLED PROFUSELY ON WOLVERINE SHIRT, SO TM DOESN'T WEAR AGAIN! HA HA HA! SCORE ONE, ME! SORRY, JOURNAL, BLEEDING ON YOU ALSO.

NOTE: BRING MORE BANDAGES TOMORROW!



TRAINING: DAY THREE

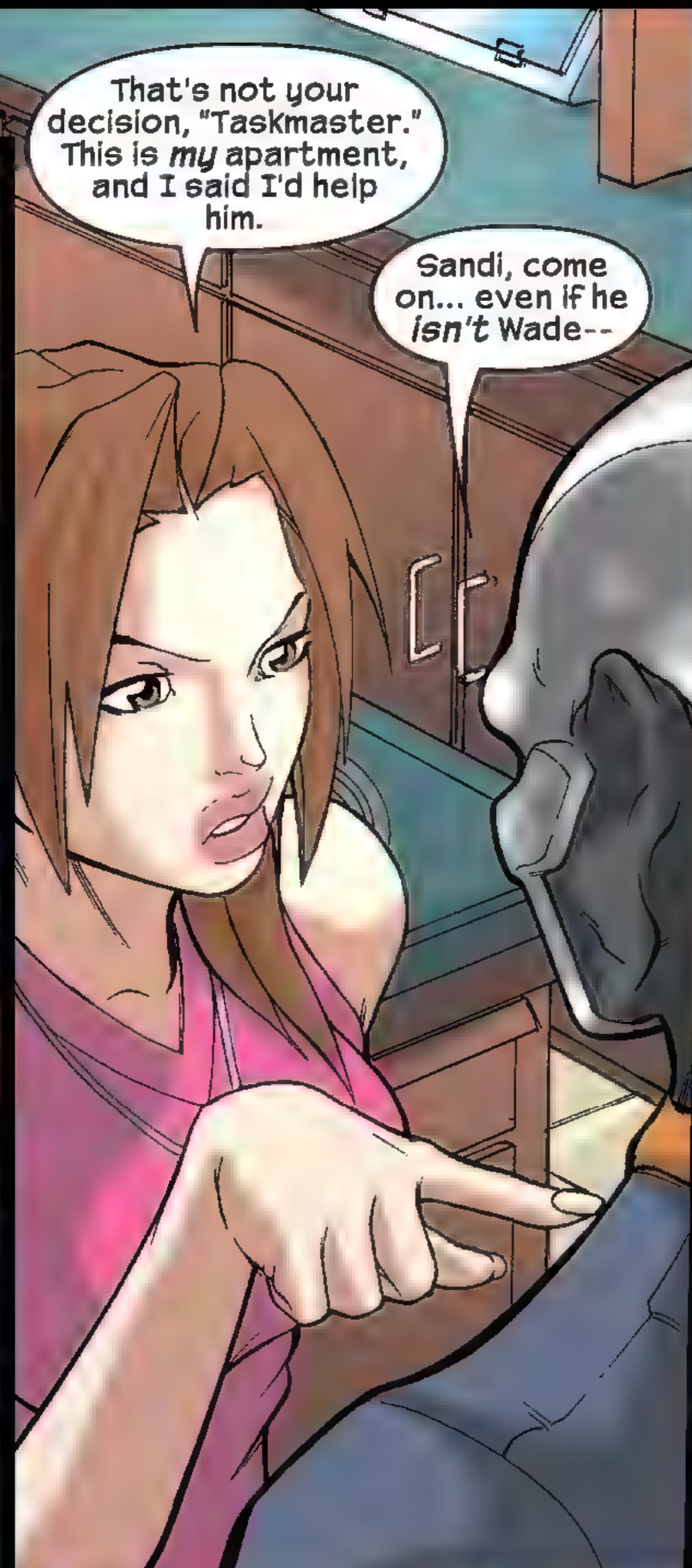
BEGINNING TO SUSPECT TM DOESN'T LIKE ME. CAN'T FIND FOOT. BEGINNING TO HATE TM.



A few days, and multiple compound fractures later...

...not trying hard enough.

I'm trying *everything* I can think of. Don't you get it? He's incompetent. Being able to heal isn't enough. I want him out of here.



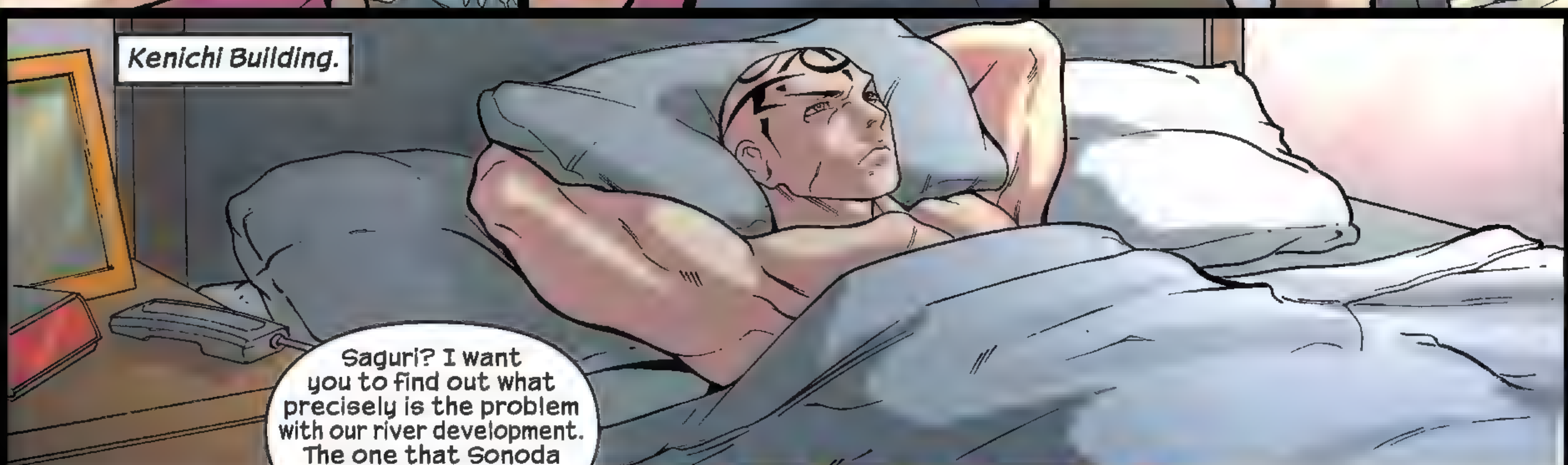
That's not your decision, "Taskmaster." This is *my* apartment, and I said I'd help him.

Sandi, come on... even if he isn't Wade--



--This guy is a flat-out, no redemption *loser*, and he's going to get himself and the people around him *dead*.

I don't want you getting *hurt* again, all right? There, I said it.



Kenichi Building.

Saguri? I want you to find out what precisely is the problem with our river development. The one that Sonoda complained about in our meeting.



Also, I want a cost analysis on whether or not Sonoda is expendable. Within the hour, please.



I've decided to be rather impatient about obtaining that land.

Yes, Higashi-sama. Do you realize that you did not apologize for waking me?

Outstanding.

TRAINING: DAY FOUR: SANDI SUGGESTS BRINGING IN OTHER TRAINERS SINCE TM OBVIOUSLY LOSING PATIENCE. OUTLAW (NOTE: DO NOT CALL HER CRAZY INEZ, DESPITE TMS ASSERTION SHE LIKES IT! OW! EARS STILL RINGING!) VERY GOOD W/ GUNS, DOESN'T STAB ME. ALSO, EYE-GOUGING, NONE. FOOT GREW BACK, TOO! WAY TO GO, FOOT!

...both eyes open, and remember to re-sight quickly after every...

CONFIDENTIAL! LIKE OUTLAW MUCH BETTER THAN INCREASINGLY CRABBY TM.

...shot.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Well, I'd say this settles it. This boy ain't Wade Wilson, or Deadpool, or whatever he was called.

Why not?

Wilson never shot this good-- Not at that distance. This'un's ambidextrous, too. Wade was a li'l better with his right.

I reckon with a gun in his hand, this boy's right dangerous.

Maybe you'd best quit pissin' him off before he realizes it.

TASK MASTER

DIE DIE DIE!

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Ka-pow, ka-pow! Ha ha!

HEY... FIRST TRAINING SESSION NOT FOLLOWED BY EXTENSIVE HEALING PROCESS! OUTLAW TRAINING METHOD FAR SUPERIOR!!!

Hinton Fields Cemetery.

Sandi's always looking at me out of the corner of her eye. I know she expects something from me... but I have no idea *what*. Taskmaster just looks at me like I'm a live grenade and he can't find the *pin*. Sick of him *and* his constant stabbing!!!

Got it. Let's go.

She's trying to help me figure out my past. I know she means well.

I checked around. No one's ever heard of him. No one's seen any sign of *Wade*, either, not since he got blown up in Germany. I think this guy *is* Wade, and he's playing us for saps.

I'm not going back to dancing, Tony. I *liked* running a merc business. And with a little help, Alex will be great at it. I know it.

But she's glossing over a very important fact--

He's like a pet to you, right? A three-legged mutt you can name and feed and buy a shiny collar for...

...Any of this look familiar, Alex? Are you remembering *anything*?

--I don't want to know my past.

Do these mean anything to you?

I *like* not knowing.

And nothing she shows me changes that.

WADE
WILSON

WADE
WILSON,
AGAIN

Nope. Sorry.

It's very liberating to not be anybody.

Kenichi Building

Gentlemen, please sit. I will tell you when you may speak.



As a token of my appreciation for your loyalty in this dark time, I have given each of you a gift-- something that belonged to our sadly departed associate, Sonoda-san.



I insist that you take my gifts to your homes and display them where they will cause you to reflect upon our trust in each other.

Wei-san. You will oversee Sonoda's territory. In particular, I wish to see immediate movement in our efforts to evict the current tenants, so that we may proceed with our river development plans.



Convince them of our will in this matter. There will be no further warnings.

H...h...
hai, Higashi-sama!

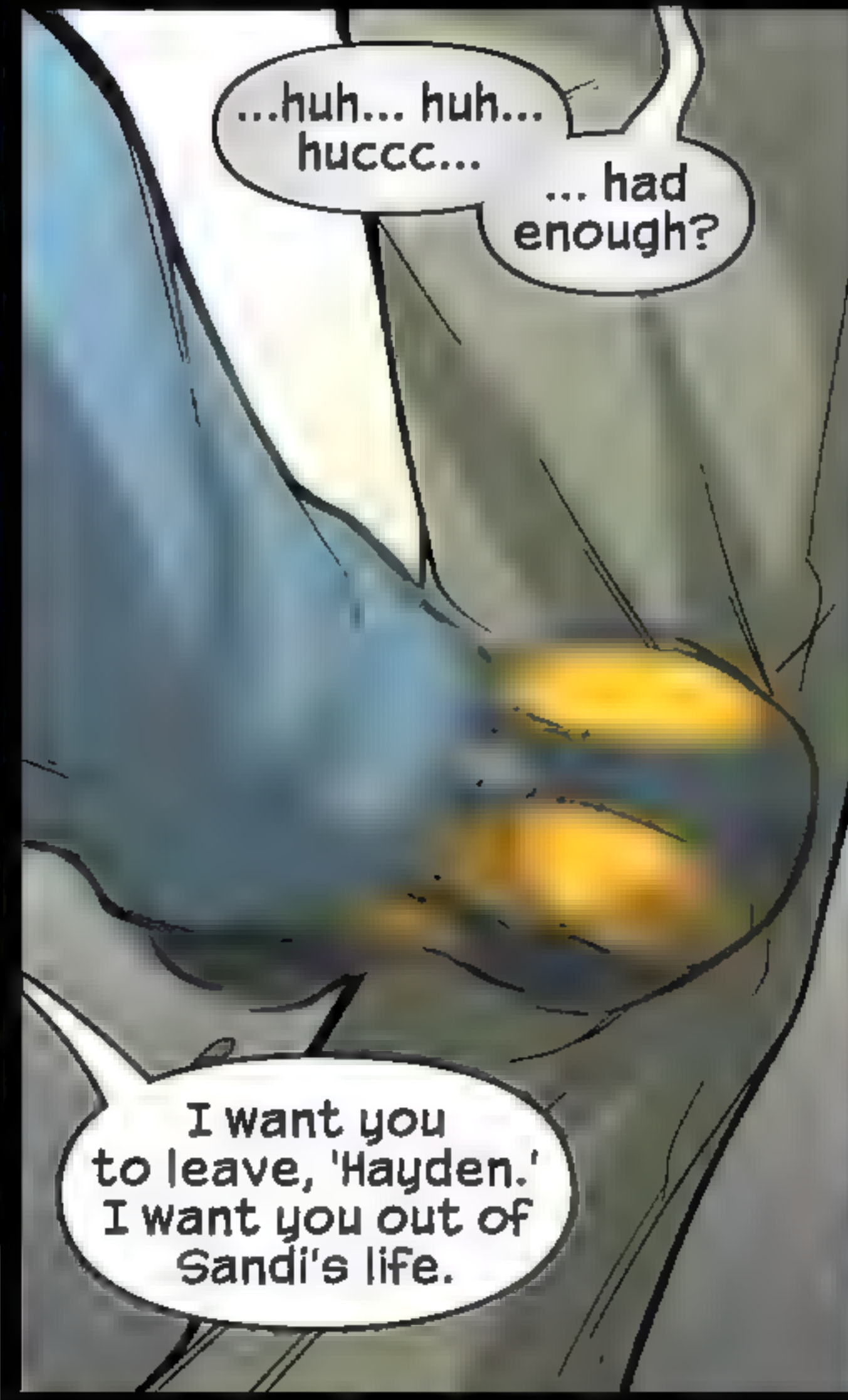
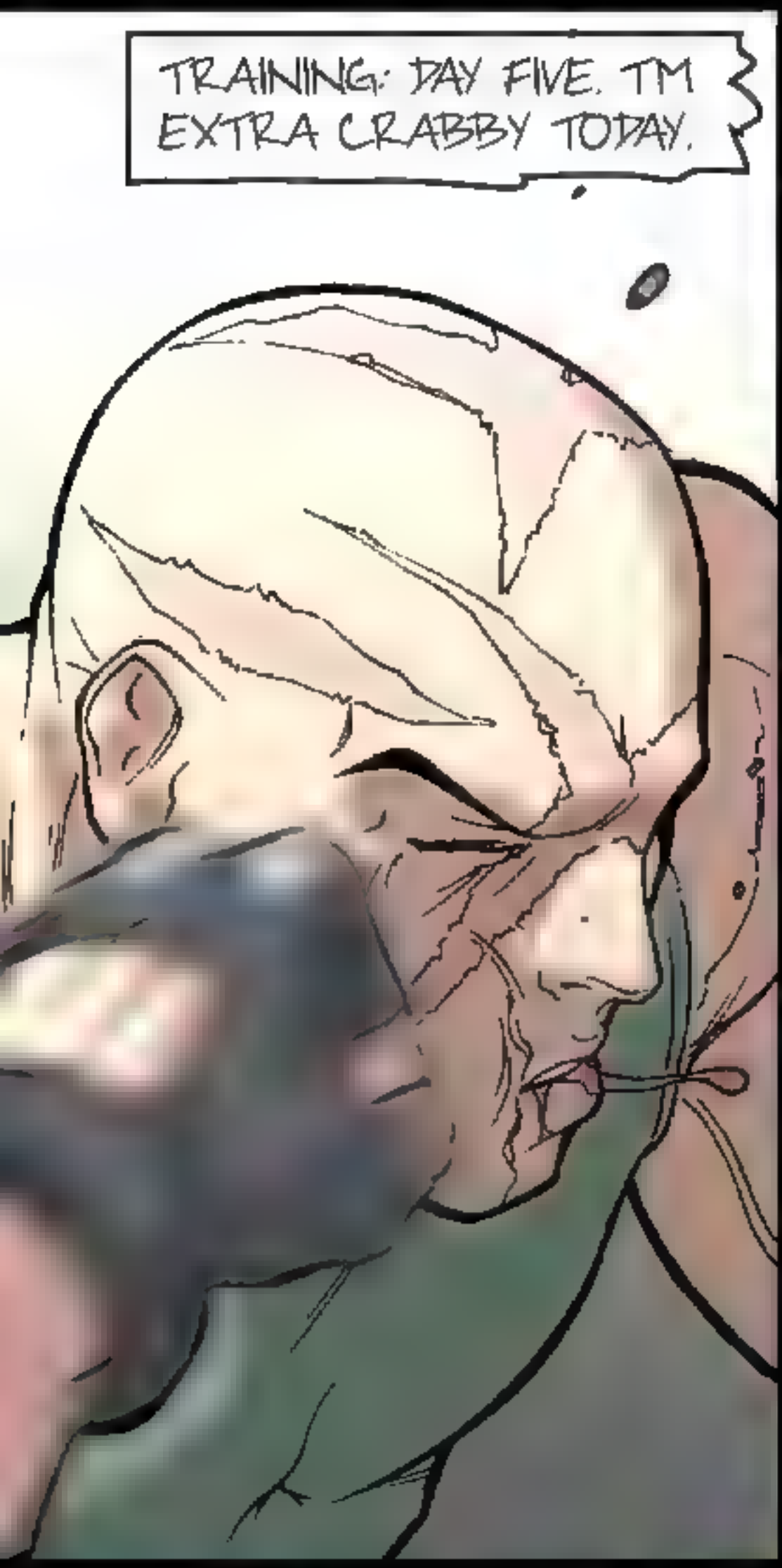
We have been adrift since the death of our Lady. The time for grief is over. There are profits to be had, acquisitions to be made and enemies to bury.



The Four Winds are returning, gentlemen.

Do not disappoint me.







Do you know I find your arrogance tedious, Mr. "Taskmaster."

How would it be if I shot *you* and told Sandi it was an accident?



But that would be impolite, which is unacceptable among gentlemen, don't you find?

...im... possible.



Excuse me?

I should be able to do that move you just did. That's my *gift*. But I can't. I can't feel how.

It's like I can't read you at *all*. That's impossible.

huk...ch... ackk.



Really? Huh.

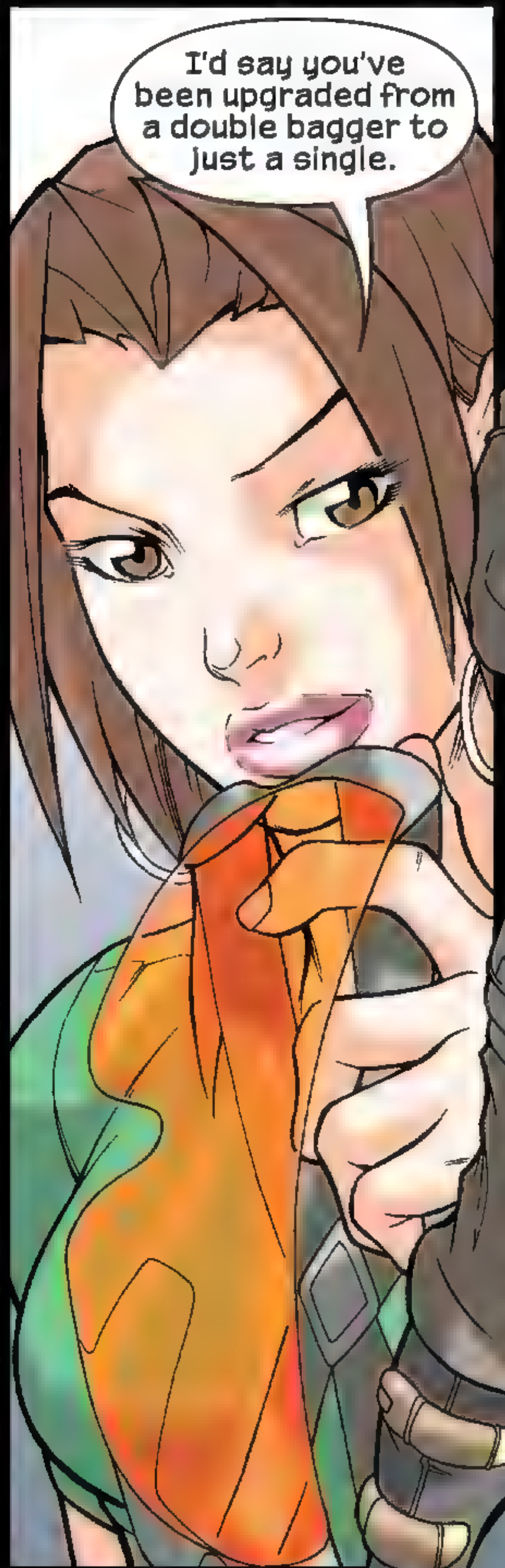
I don't even know what I did.



Give me back my gun, Hayden.

NOTE: TM EXTREMELY CRABBY FOR REST OF SESSION. PAIN, BLOOD, SNAPPING, POPPING, RIPPING. TM BECOMING REAL ASS PAIN, HAS MANY ISSUES AND REAL BIG STABBING PROBLEM.

RESOLVE NOT TO HUMILIATE TM, ALSO, GET OWN GUNS, JUST IN CASE.



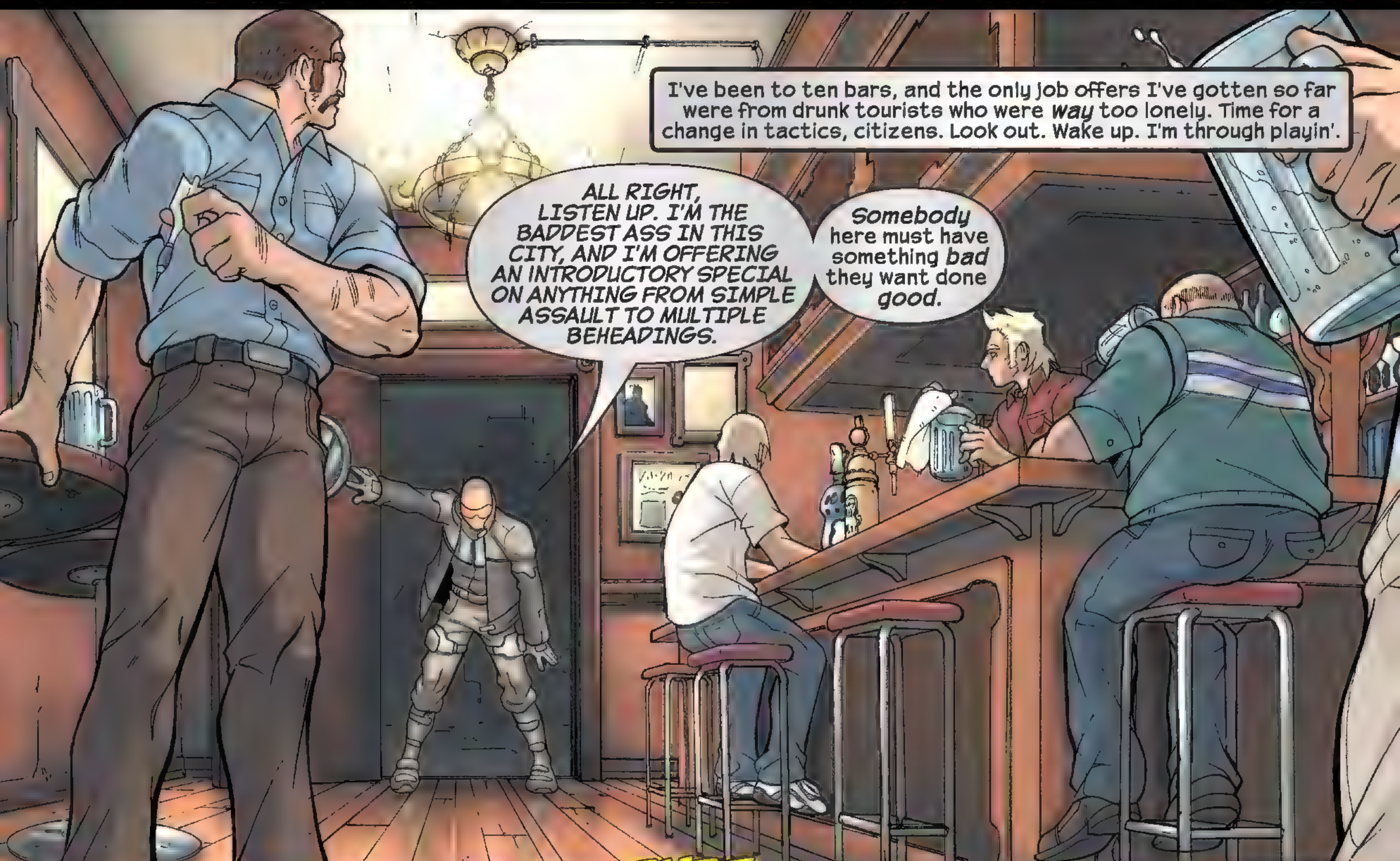
"Don't listen to him, Alex. You can
do this. Just go where people look
the most desperate-- sooner or
later you'll find a client."



Forty minutes
later...

HA HA HA
HA HA!

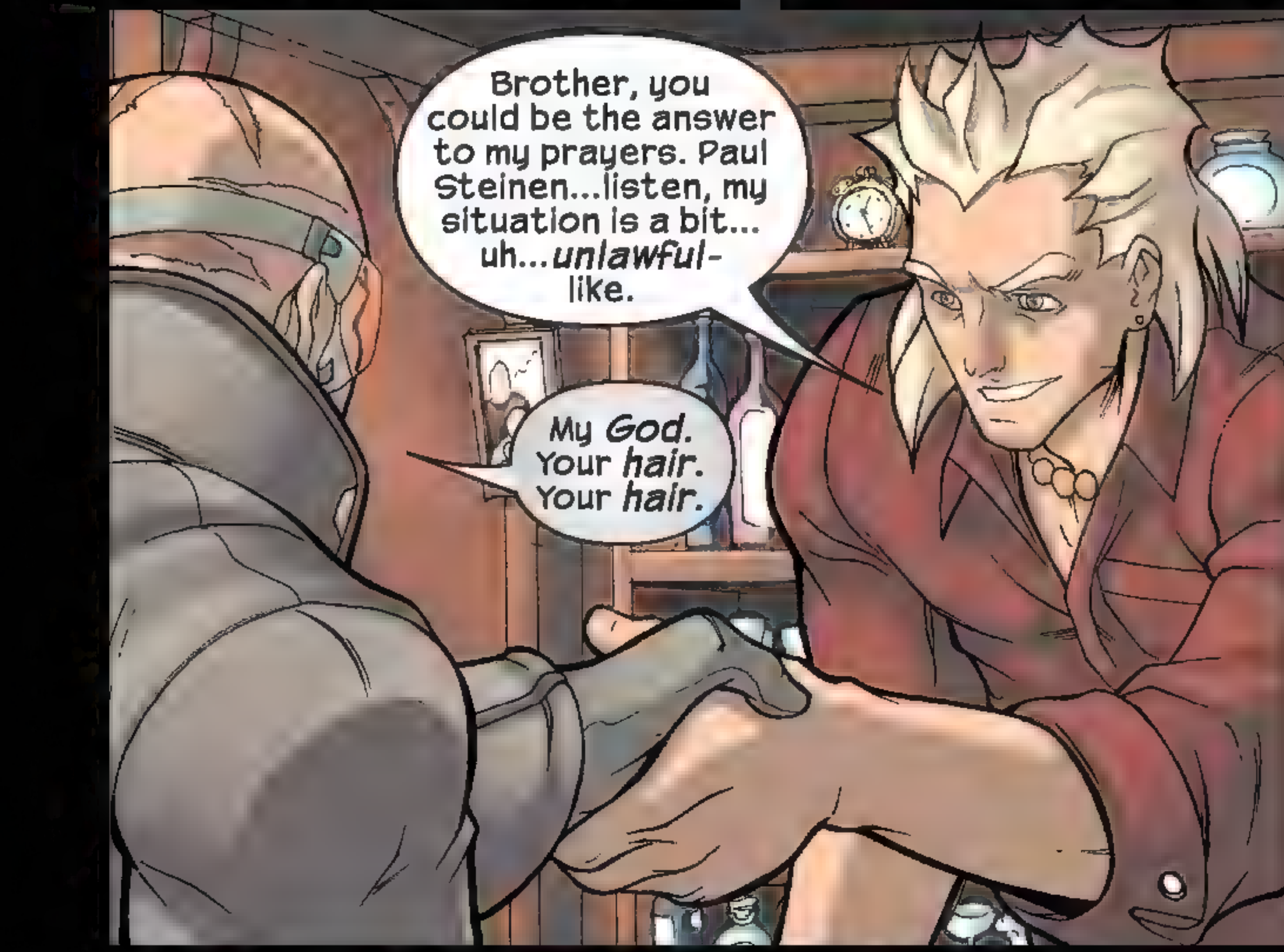


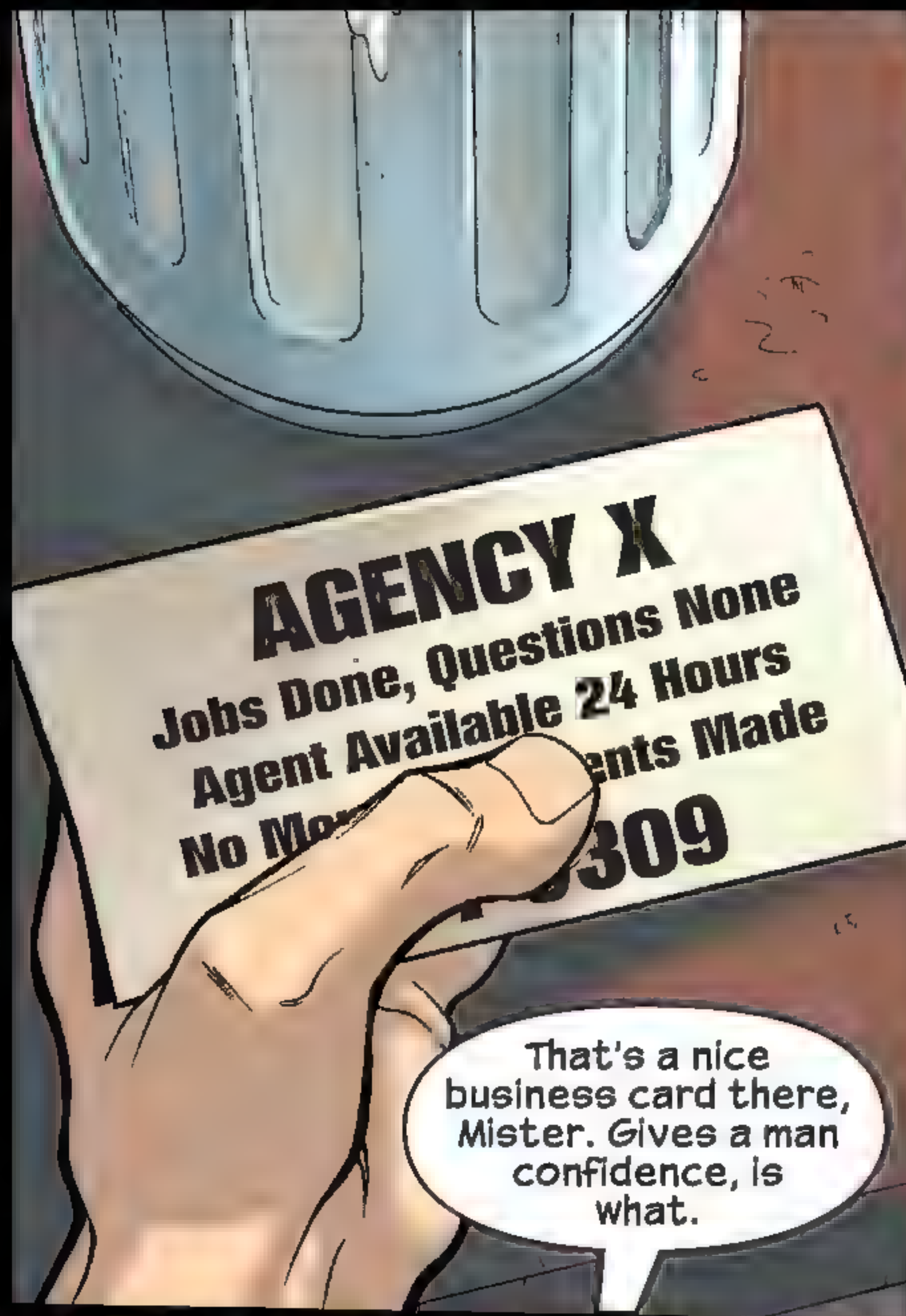


I've been to ten bars, and the only job offers I've gotten so far were from drunk tourists who were *way* too lonely. Time for a change in tactics, citizens. Look out. Wake up. I'm through playin'.

ALL RIGHT, LISTEN UP. I'M THE BADDEST ASS IN THIS CITY, AND I'M OFFERING AN INTRODUCTORY SPECIAL ON ANYTHING FROM SIMPLE ASSAULT TO MULTIPLE BEHEADINGS.

Somebody here must have something *bad* they want done *good*.





Well, then why not take care of this yourself?

"Uh, nossir, I'm scared of those beasts."

Hey, Cheetah. Wanna go home? Home? Bananas, naughty movies on Animal Planet, all the poop you can throw?

"What you need to do is retrieve the animals, real quiet-like, before they kill somebody. But listen--*stay away* from them developers. I ain't lying, they'll kill you *over good*."

Lessee. Can't tranq him up here...

...a doped-up orangutan landing on a passerby would probably get me fired...

... heh. A monkey junkie. Funky.

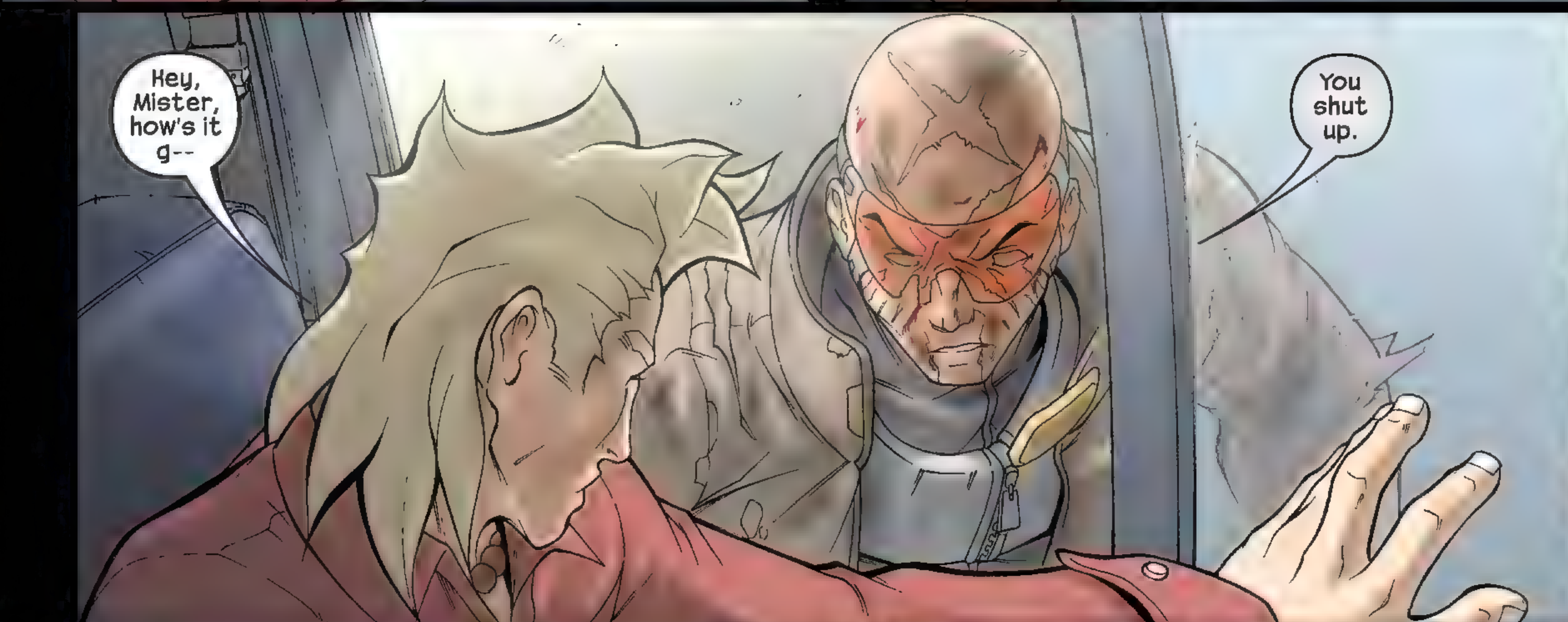
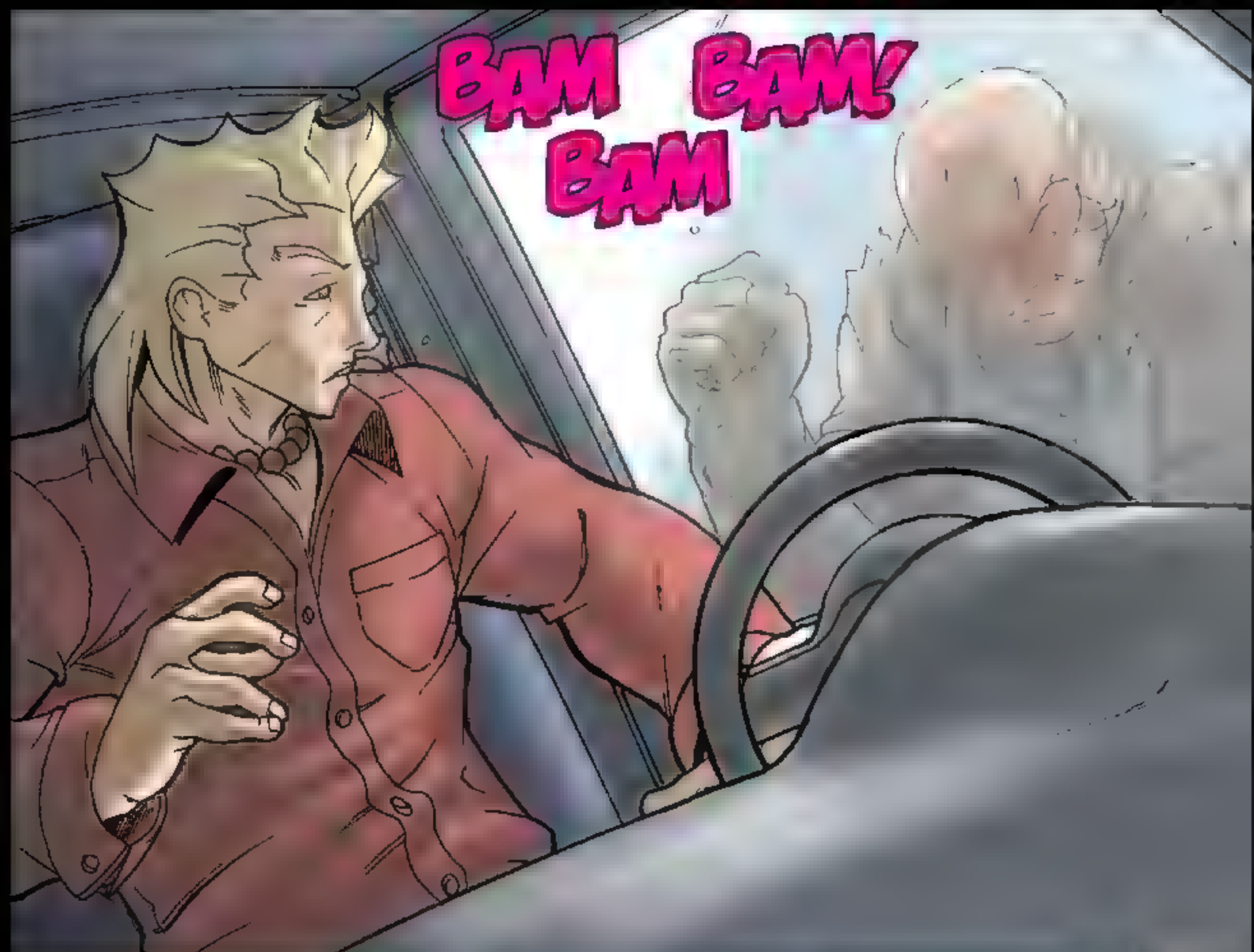
Okay...look, I'm putting my gun down. I'm coming over there slowly. Don't be nervous.

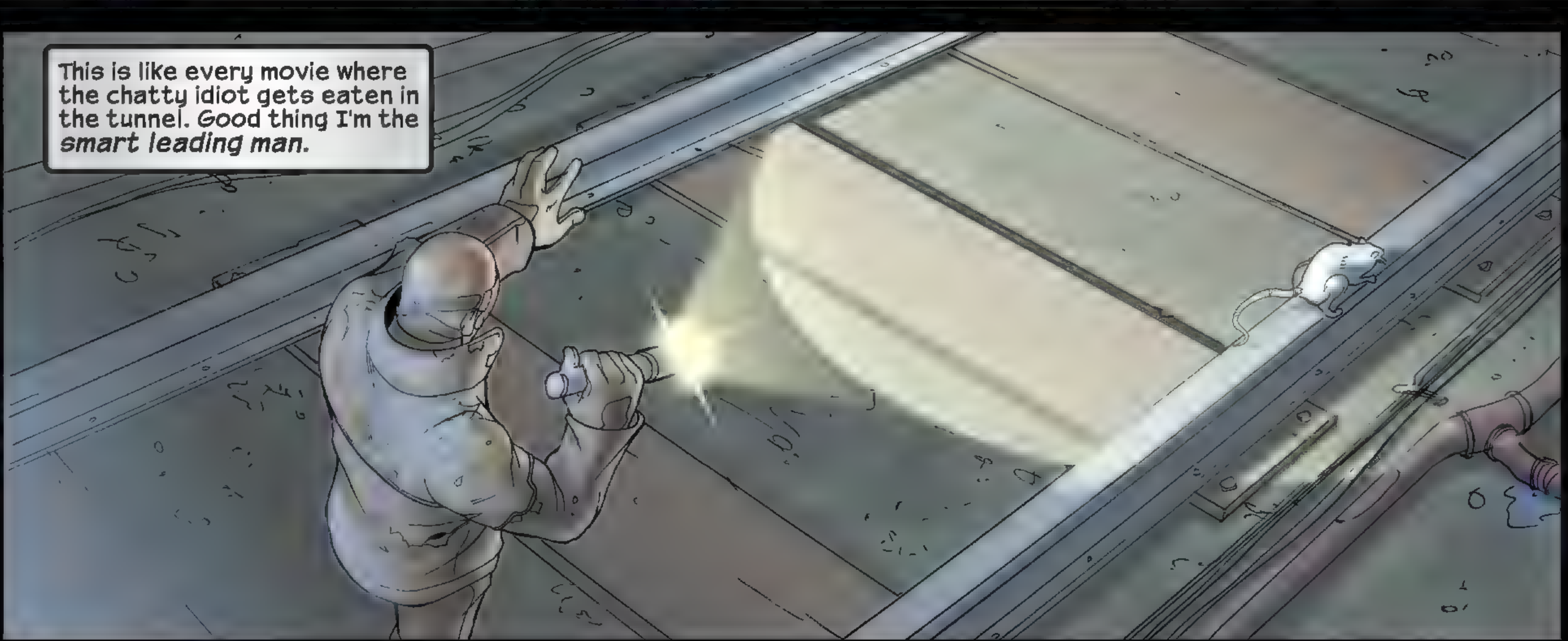
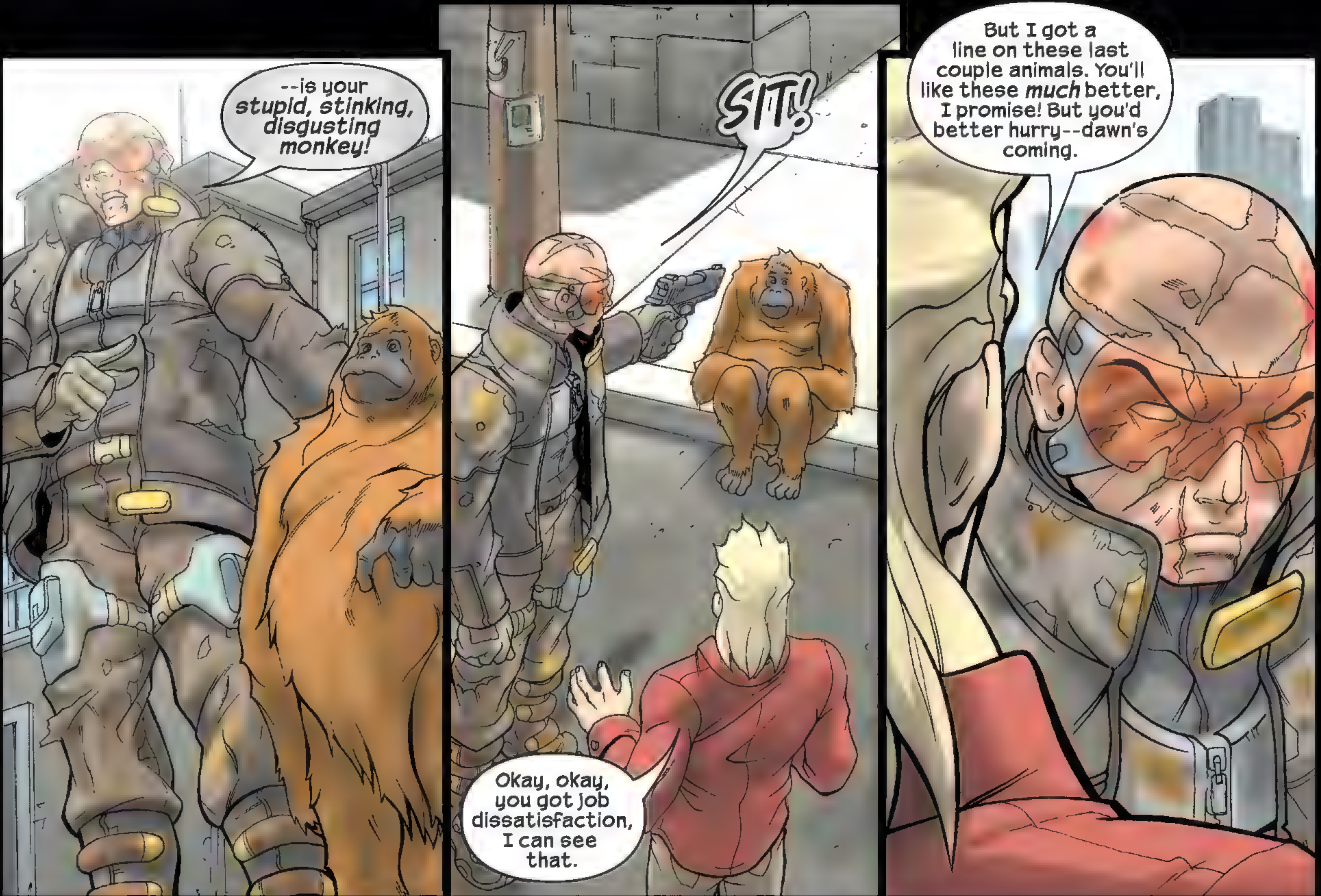
Beautiful. I'm shouting at the monkey. Like *that* helps.

Uh-oh.

Ack! What'd I step in?

CRAP-AMUND!





RRRRRRRR

Okay,
okay. There
you are, baby.
It's okay.



You know,
my friend Sandi has
this cat you could eat.
He's just a pathetic
little thing. I'd
never tell.

Damn. She's
over the third
rail.

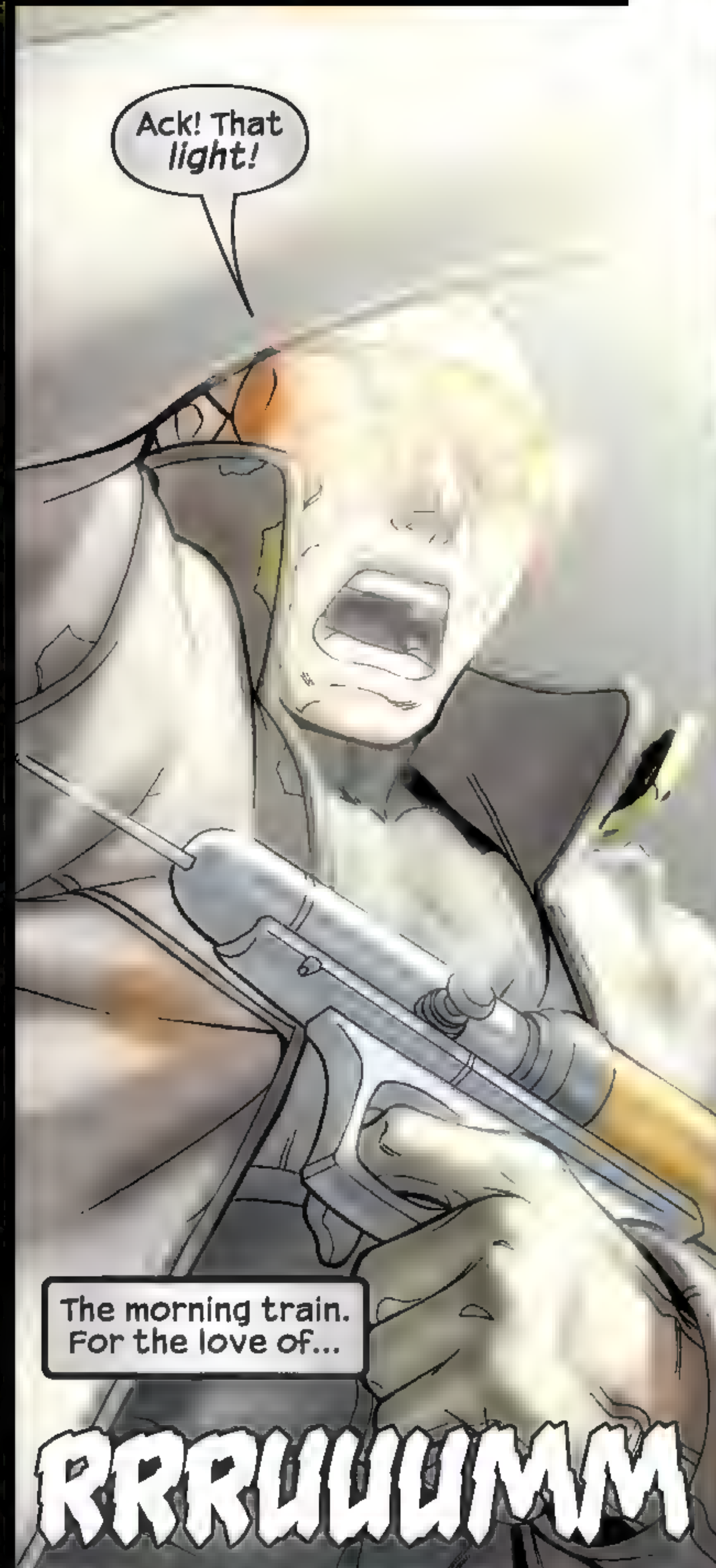
Come on, baby. You
don't belong here.
Just... watch your
step, okay?

I have a no-
pouncing policy
I hope you'll
honor.

Actually,
if I don't die,
this is pretty
cool.



Ack! That
light!



The morning train.
For the love of...

RRRUUUMM

RRRUUUMMMM



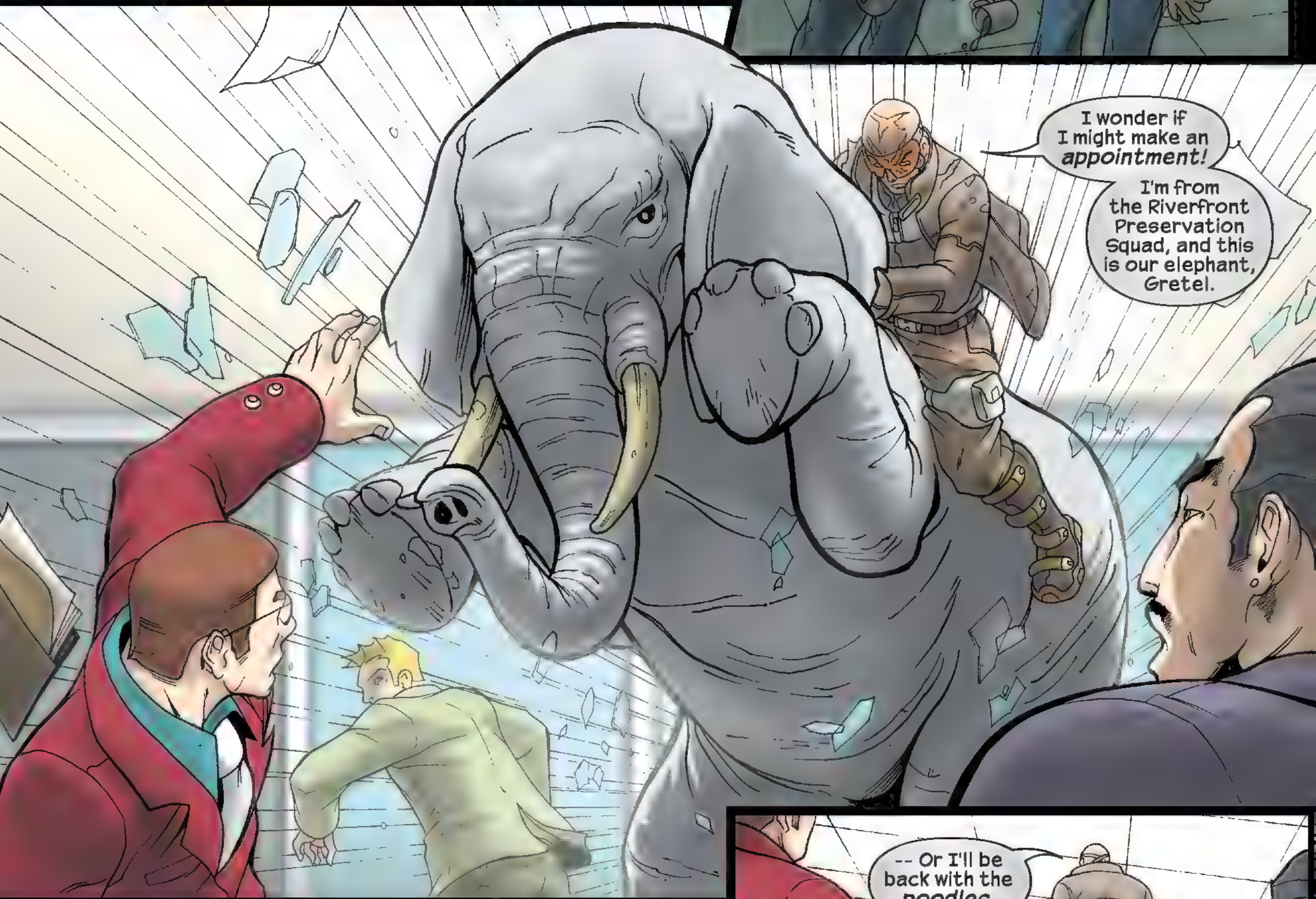
I can see the
headlines now:

Merc Eaten By Tiger.
Should Have Realized
Mullet Was Bad Omen.

[illegible][illegible]

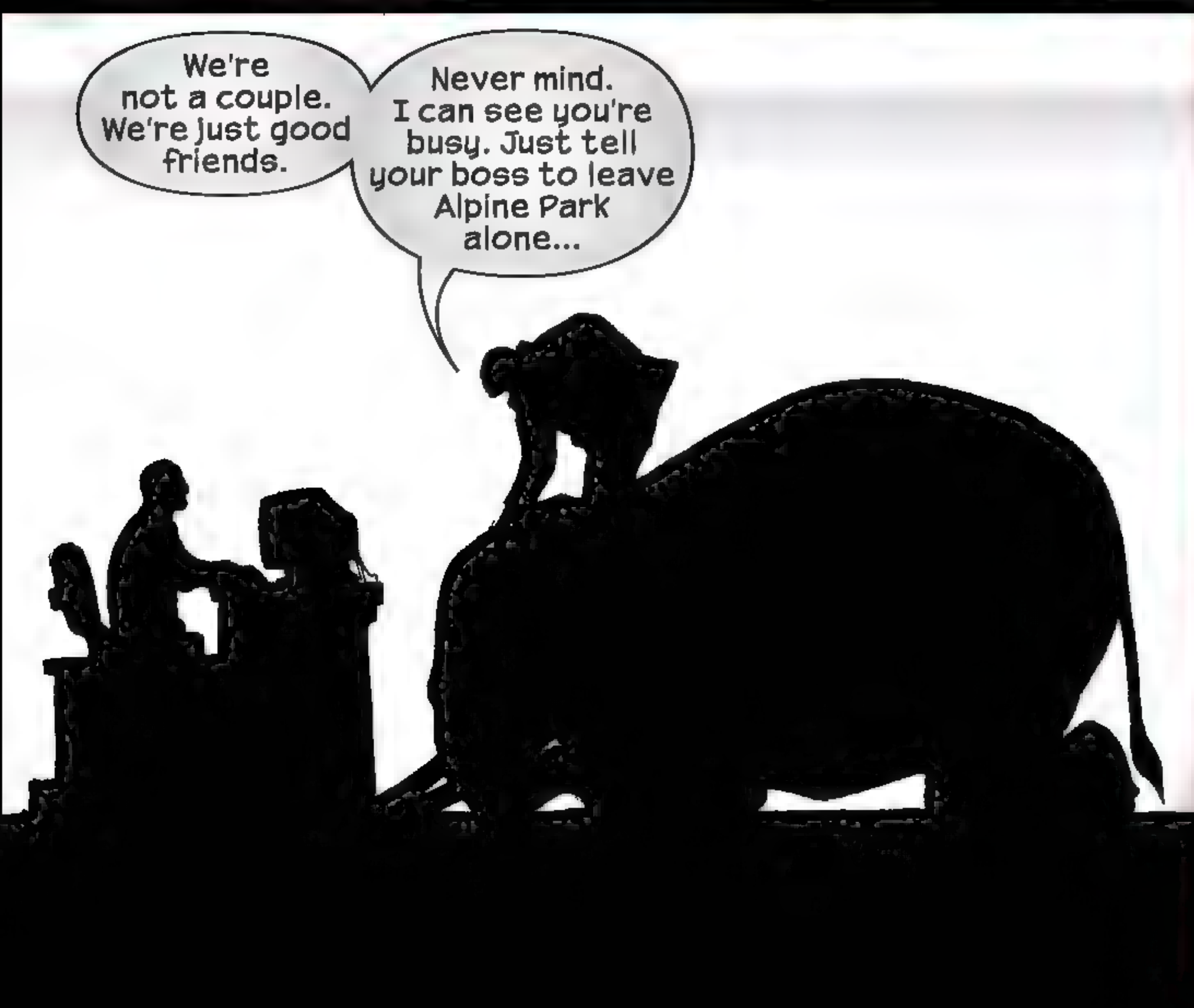


Main entrance,
Kenichi Building...



I wonder if
I might make an
appointment!

I'm from
the Riverfront
Preservation
Squad, and this
is our elephant,
Gretel.



We're
not a couple.
We're just good
friends.

Never mind.
I can see you're
busy. Just tell
your boss to leave
Alpine Park
alone...



-- Or I'll be
back with the
poodles.



...doesn't matter what the bounty is. I'm not messing with that guy. It ain't worth it.

No, it's okay. I appreciate the offer.



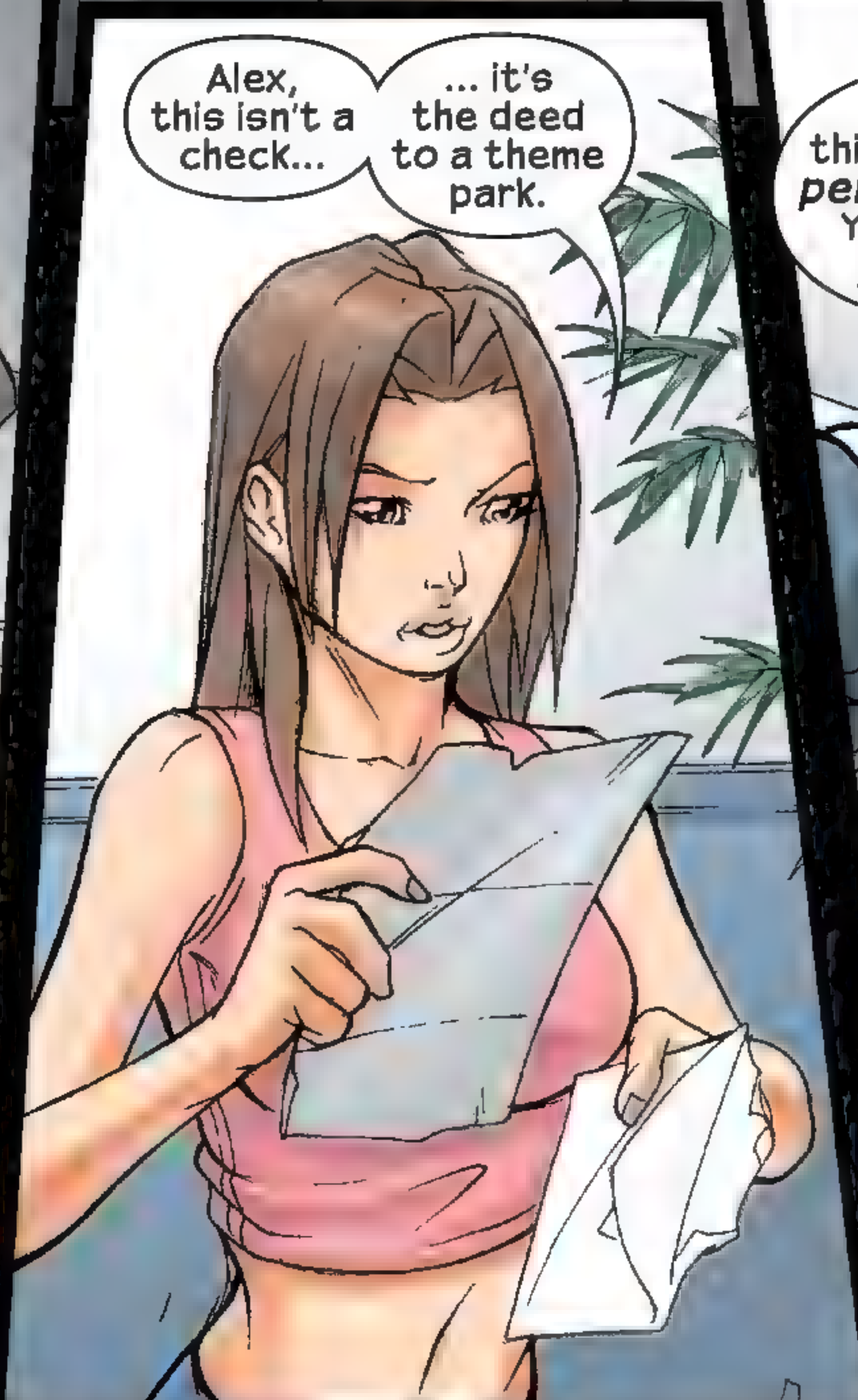
Never again. I don't care if I'm starving. No more animal jobs.

I stink in five species!



But I *did* it. I proved I could, Mr. Tough-Guy. So I'm not taking any more *crap* from *you*. Are we clear?

As crystal, Circus Boy.



Alex, this isn't a check...

... it's the deed to a theme park.



AAAAUGH!

Listen, I have this friend...he'd be perfect for this job. Yeah, he's a real professional.

NEXT ISSUE
THE PUNISHER
VS.
AGENT X

AGENT X

Real name: Alex Hayden

Height: 6'

Weight: 215 lbs.

Eye color: Brown

Hair color: None

Powers/Weapons:

- Superhuman healing factor
- Above-average strength, speed and dexterity
- Proficient in the use of virtually any weapon, but especially good with a firearm. Any firearm.

He knows nothing of his past ... and he doesn't care. Taking the name Alex Hayden, the man now called Agent X literally stumbled into the life of receptionist Sandi Brandenburg, who took him in because of his resemblance to an old friend and her fondness for hard-luck cases.

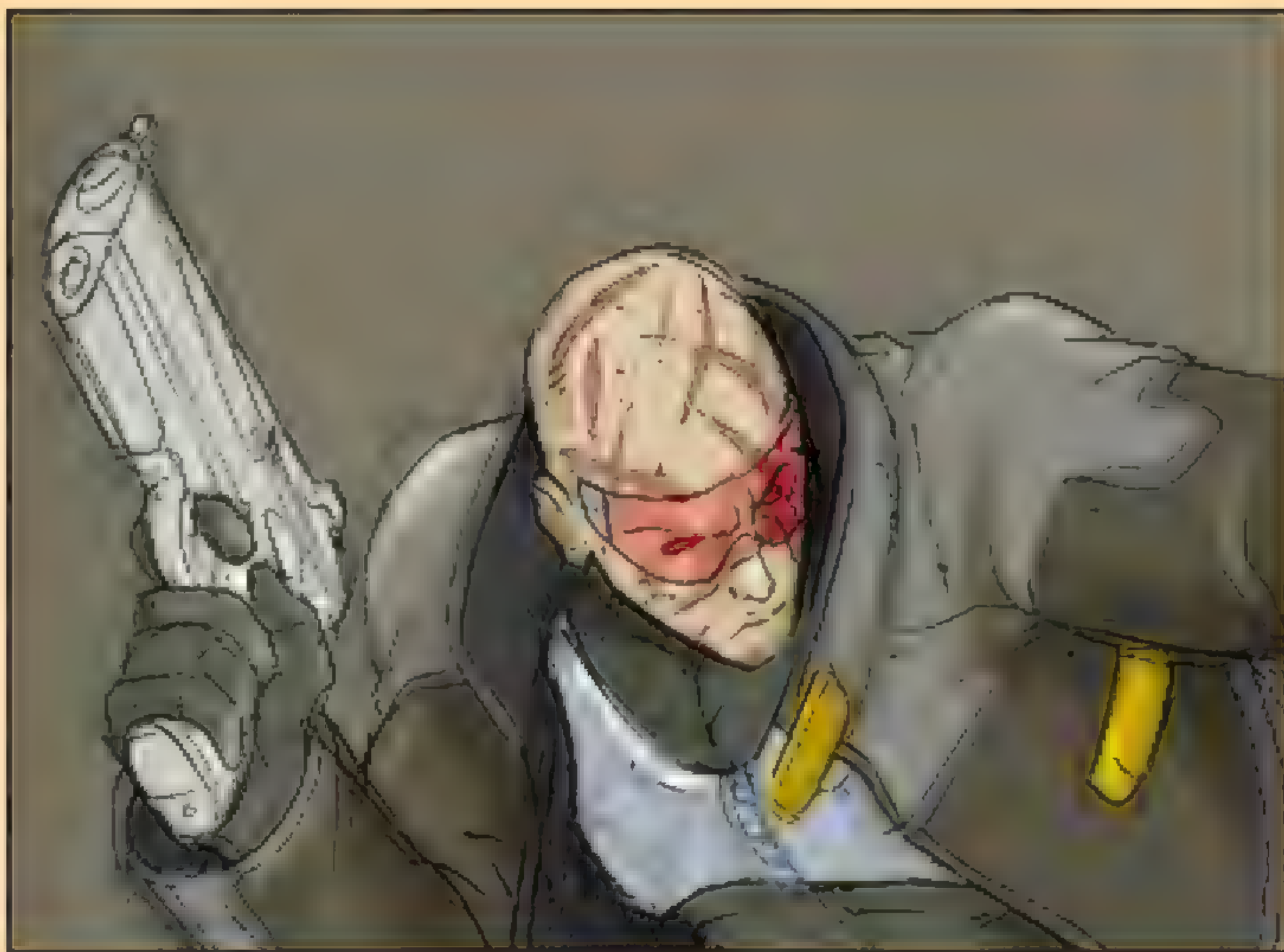
Appearing to have been grievously wounded, with the letter "X" carved into both his skull and face, Hayden arrived as a blank slate. As far as he knew, he had come into existence only moments before he found Sandi. While Hayden recalled nothing of his previous life, he did know one thing: With burning conviction, he wanted to become the world's best mercenary.

Sandi took compassion on Hayden and appealed to her boyfriend — the Taskmaster, a world-renowned mercenary — to train him. Taskmaster believed Hayden was merely an old colleague pretending to be stricken with amnesia, but his theory was refuted when Hayden denied under great duress approaching torture that he knew anything about his past.

The Taskmaster's training worked in ways neither Hayden nor his teacher had expected. The instruction awakened some innate ability, and Hayden's skills grew exponentially with experience — even more so during times of stress. Taskmaster grows increasingly jealous of Sandi's attachment to a man he considered a castoff, so watch out, Alex!

Together, Hayden and Brandenburg formed Agency X, a no-questions-asked mercenary service. Armed with any number of weapons, but especially proficient with handguns, a non-stop mouth and a bizarre sense of humor, Agent X seeks to make a name for himself as a soldier-for-hire.

Refusing to pause for even a moment of self-reflection, Hayden's singular ambition drives him ever onward. To what end, though, Hayden himself may never know. His total being is focused only on acquiring the skills he needs to be the best mercenary the world has ever seen. So far, he's succeeding. Agent X is very good at doing very bad things.



SIMONE ■ LEE ■ UDON AGENT X

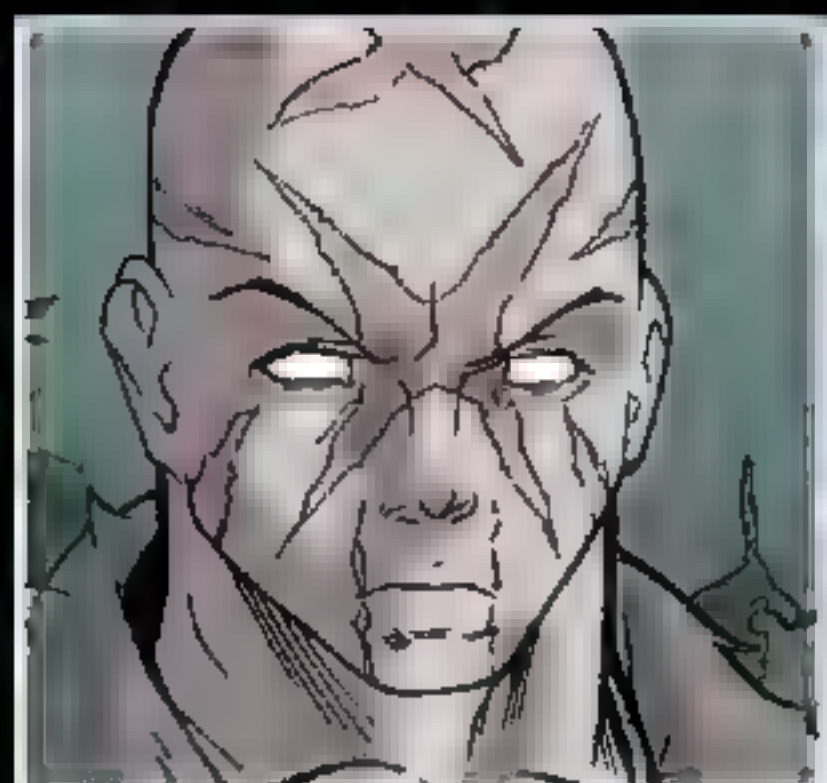
MARVEL

AGENT X

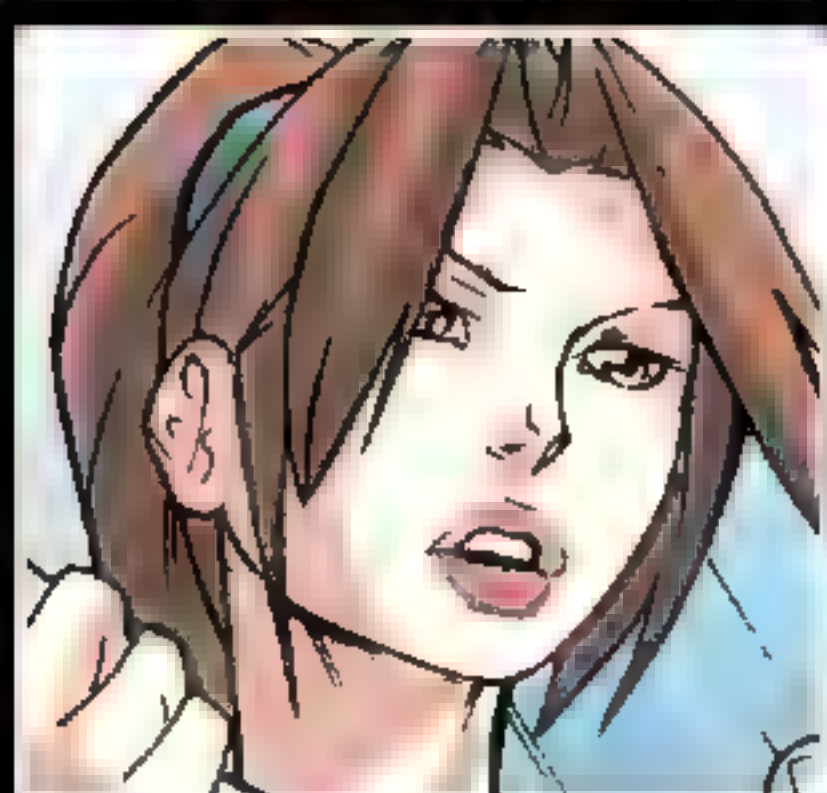


Previously in:

AGENT X



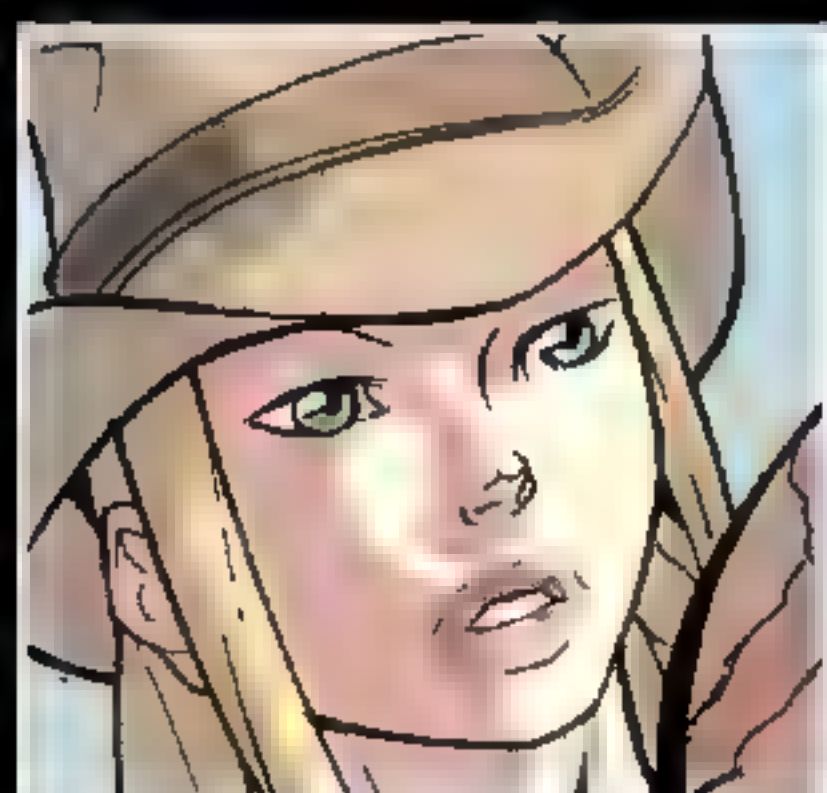
Agent X



Sandi



Taskmaster



Outlaw

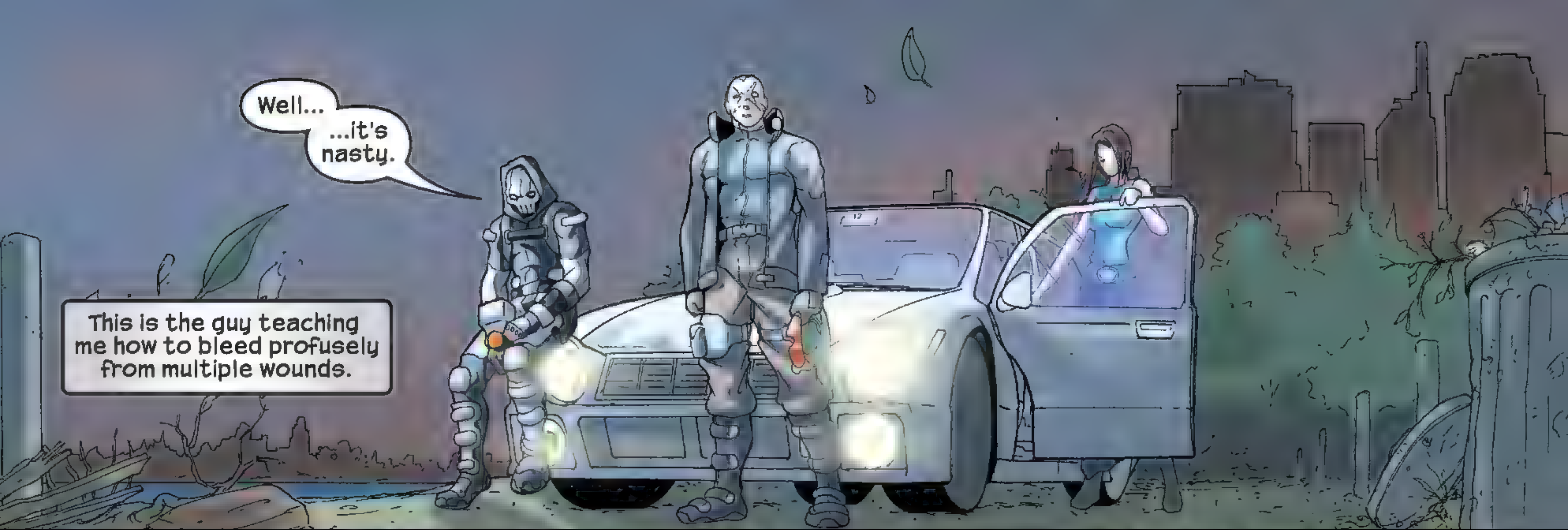
The man now known as Agent X arrived hungry, helpless and drooling at former secretary Sandi Brandenburg's doorstep, begging for her help. Sandi, with a penchant for taking in mangy strays and seeing a resemblance to an old friend in the strange man, agreed to help him start a new life and career. Together they founded the mercenary agency: Agency X.

Choosing the name Alex Hayden, our hero began training immediately. Sandi enlisted the help of fellow mercenaries Taskmaster and Outlaw to train Hayden. Taskmaster took an immediate dislike to Hayden after seeing the same resemblance to Sandi's old friend, whom he also despised and considered a rival. After several bloody training sessions, which included multiple stabbings courtesy of the Taskmaster, Hayden finished his training and accepted his first mission: Gathering rogue carnival animals.

The animals were released to threaten and intimidate the carnival owner, who refused to sell his property to a mysterious Japanese criminal organization known as the Four Winds. Hayden successfully gathered the animals and, to send an intimidating message of his own, crashed an elephant into the lobby of the building where the head of the Four Winds, Higashi, resided.

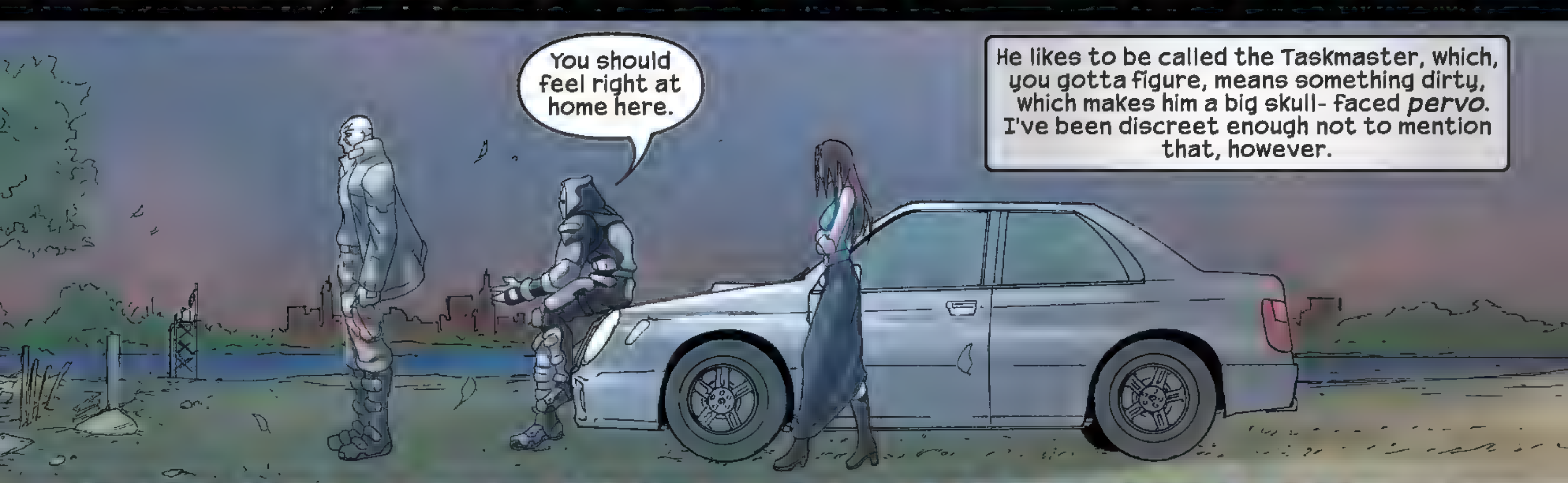
Having successfully completed his first job, Hayden is thrilled to find his payment is the deed to his client's abandoned carnival. If only everyone else was as thrilled..





Well...
...it's
nasty.

This is the guy teaching
me how to bleed profusely
from multiple wounds.



You should
feel right at
home here.

He likes to be called the Taskmaster, which,
you gotta figure, means something dirty,
which makes him a big skull- faced *pervo*.
I've been discreet enough not to mention
that, however.

DEAD MAN'S SWITCH PART 2

Story by Gail Simone	Art by UDON with Alvin Lee, Eric Vedder, Rob Ross, Calvin Lo, Arnold Tsang, Andrew Hou, TheRealTI! & Omar Dogan	UDON Chief Erik Ko	Letters by Dave Sharpe	Assisted by Lynne Yoshii	Edited by Andrew Lis	Chief Joe Quesada	President Bill Jemas
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This whole
area used to be
really pretty. We'd
take the train out
here when I was
little.

Now it
looks like a
poverty bomb
exploded.

This is my new
business partner,
Sandi Brandenburg.
She believes in me,
but don't judge
her by that.



And my name is Alex Hayden.
I keep thinking, if I repeat that
enough times, I'll start to know
why I picked it.

You guys
aren't seeing
this right.

I mean,
I'm looking right
at it...

ALPINE PARK

...And it's the most beautiful thing I've ever *seen*.

I'm the only guy I know whose autobiography is three sentences long:

I showed up on Sandi's doorstep.

I don't know who I am or how I got there.

And I don't *care*.

But this...this *feels* like something. Something *great*.



Our first job, Sandi, and we get *this* as payment.

Just *look* at it! Wonder if he left the animals?

I feel like a kid in a candy store that has nudie magazines and illegal fireworks... or, you know, skip the candy store part, really.



I don't know, Alex. The whole place looks pretty run-down and...uh...incredibly, unbelievably *dangerous*.

What are you *talking* about? Come on, let's open it up and ride the coaster! Let's deep-fry us some corn dogs-- We can all get tattoos and hoot at underage girls!

I swear, some people got no *vision*.



Kenichi Building

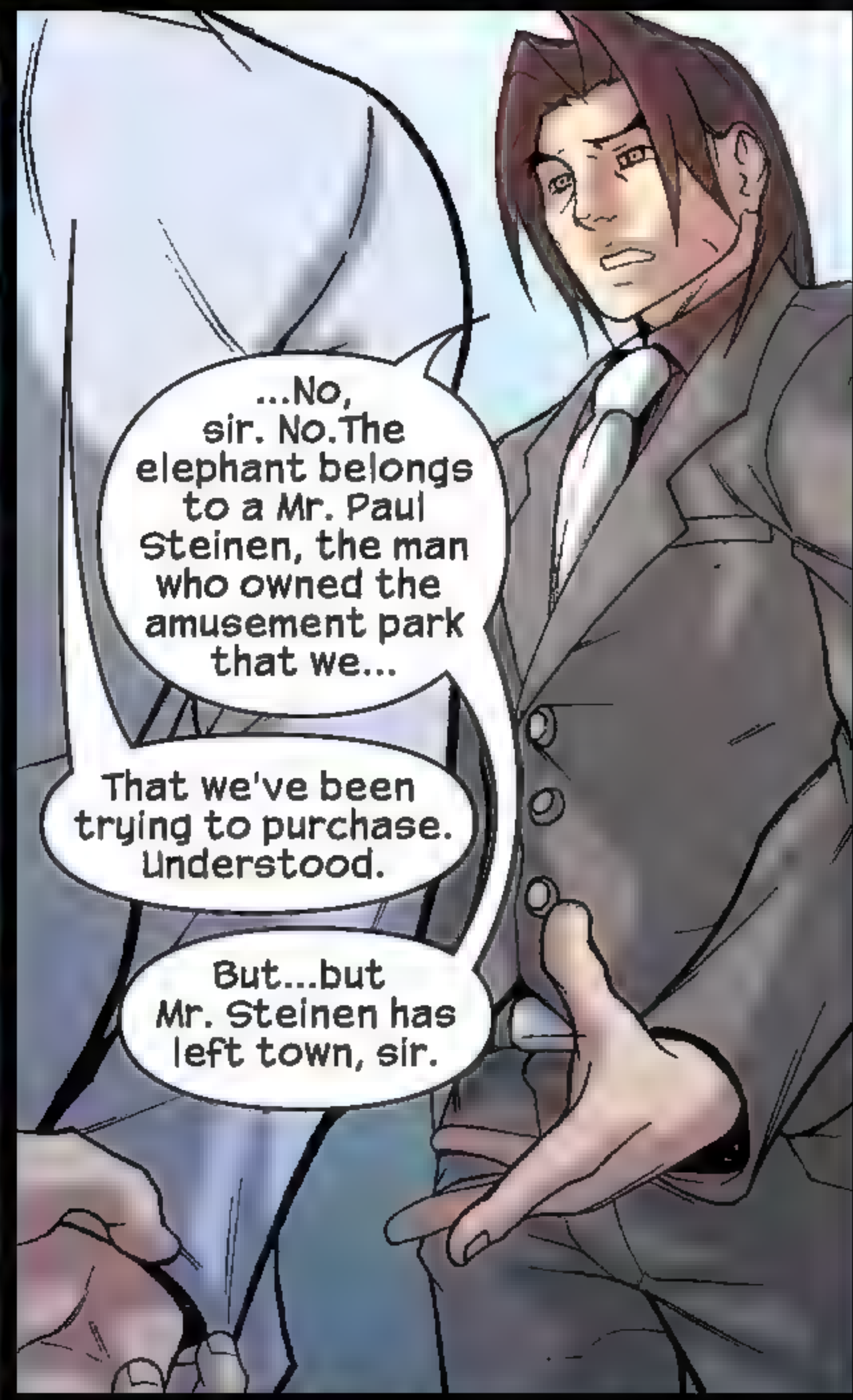
"Repeat your last statement to me, Wei-san."



It was ...er...it was an insane man riding an elephant, Higashi-sama.

...

I can't imagine it should be very difficult to narrow down the list of suspects in this particular case, Wei.



...No, sir. No. The elephant belongs to a Mr. Paul Steinen, the man who owned the amusement park that we...

That we've been trying to purchase. Understood.

But...but Mr. Steinen has left town, sir.



Then I believe the new owner of that property has made his unwillingness to sell very clear, wouldn't you say?

"Wei-san, please work up a cost analysis for having the park's new owner killed, versus upping our cash offer for the property by 5%. Immediately, please."

Hey, 'Hayden.' You don't have *time* for this. I got you a *gig*.

What? Really?

What kind of gig, Tony?

Strictly a no-monkey gig-- low risk, high pay. I'd go myself, but tonight's Iron Chef.

I wrote down the directions. You can take my wheels, no sweat.

Huh. Maybe he's not such a jerk, after all. *Damn*, this is a sweet ride.

Your car? Really? What?

Hey, quit acting so shocked! I *want* you to succeed-- that's why I'm so hard on you. It's like *tough love*.

God, he's got *all* the Spice Girls CDs, even the *solo* stuff!

Those are *private*!

Alex...you be careful.

If something doesn't feel right, you *leave*.

Yeah, yeah, don't worry, Gramma. Geez, is there no classical?

I don't like this--I don't think he's ready.

Fish gotta fly, bird gotta swim.

Big bad merc gotta listen to *Spice Girls*.

Hey!

Half an hour later, I'm at my first job that doesn't include monkey wrestling. *Hopefully.*

"...appreciate the five of you coming in like this. We're interested in offering you a sporting proposition...sort of a scavenger hunt for hired guns."

**CULVER SPORT
AND GUN CLUB**
est. 1887.
Members Only

Each of *us* has hired each of *you* to obtain a pair of...*unique* items. We've each contributed \$50,000 as a completion bonus for the merc who returns with the items within 48 hours. With me so far?

\$250,000?
Roger that.

Met most of these zambonis in the waiting room--hardcore guys, all...

B-1.

B-1, giving a "thumbs up" sign.

The Scalpel.

...just a simple procedure for a reasonable fee...

Bloc.

~mmfda~

And my sometime-pistol-trainer, *Outlaw.*

Shouldn't we find out what the job *is* first?



You guys are destroying my vision of a cashless society!



I mean... uh... I'm in. I'm in.

I'm a merc ahead of my time.



The sponsor of the victorious operative will *keep* the items for his collection. That's the real prize.

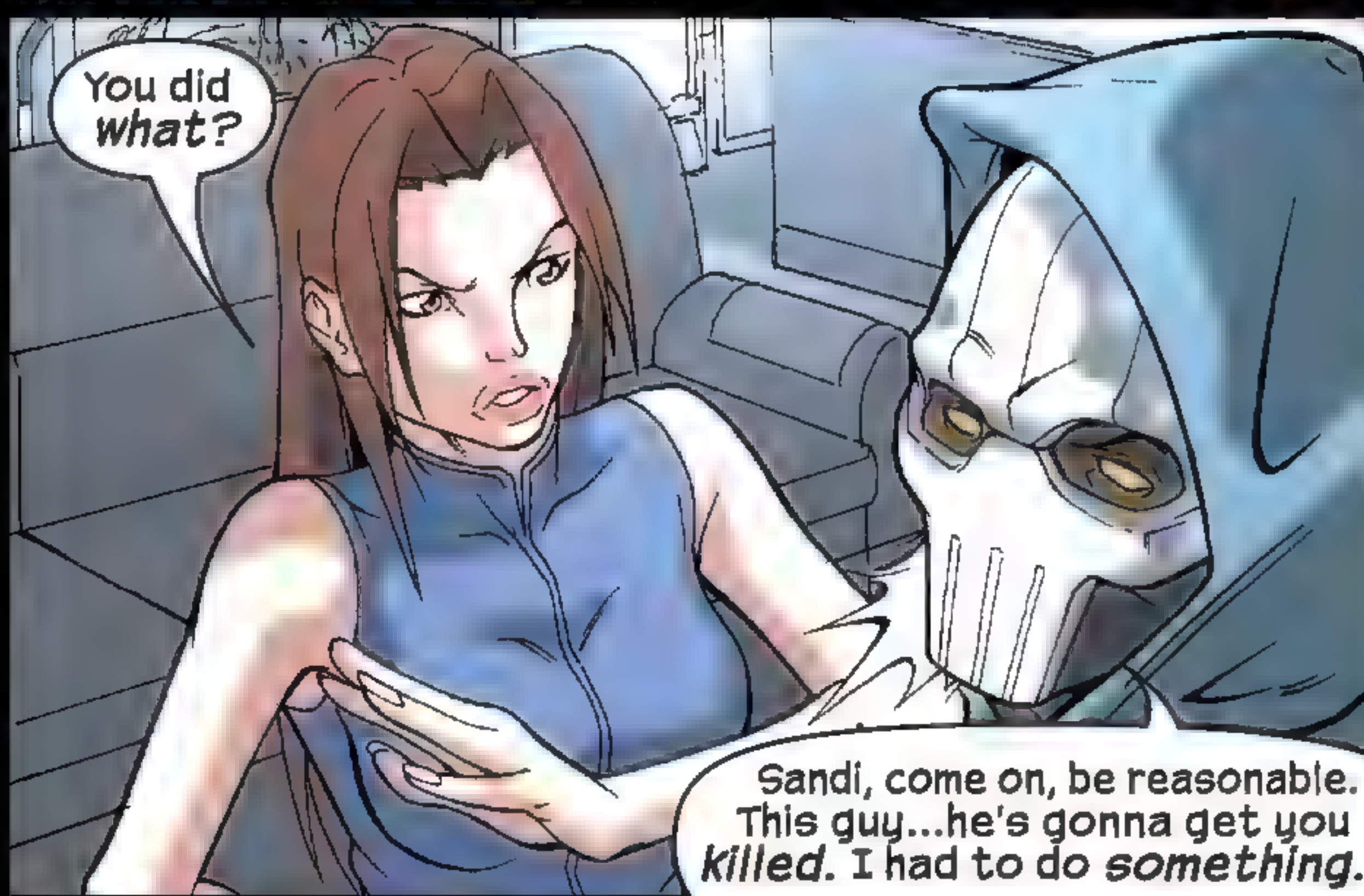
And for added amusement, the winning sponsor *also* takes possession of the other sponsors' *mistresses*.



Look. We. Don't. Care.

What is it you want us to get?

If I wanted useless chat, I'd get AOL.



You did what?

Sandi, come on, be reasonable. This guy...he's gonna get you killed. I had to do *something*.

"You sent *Alex*--untrained, inexperienced *Alex*--to go get..."

...The Punisher's guns.



Outlaw shoots me a look...is it protective? A warning? A threat? Never saw her spooked before.

This Punisher guy must be rough company.

One of you will return with the Punisher's custom .45s and collect the bounty. We have arranged for his current prey to be at the location we have provided you.

We of course expect a rousing competition from all of you.

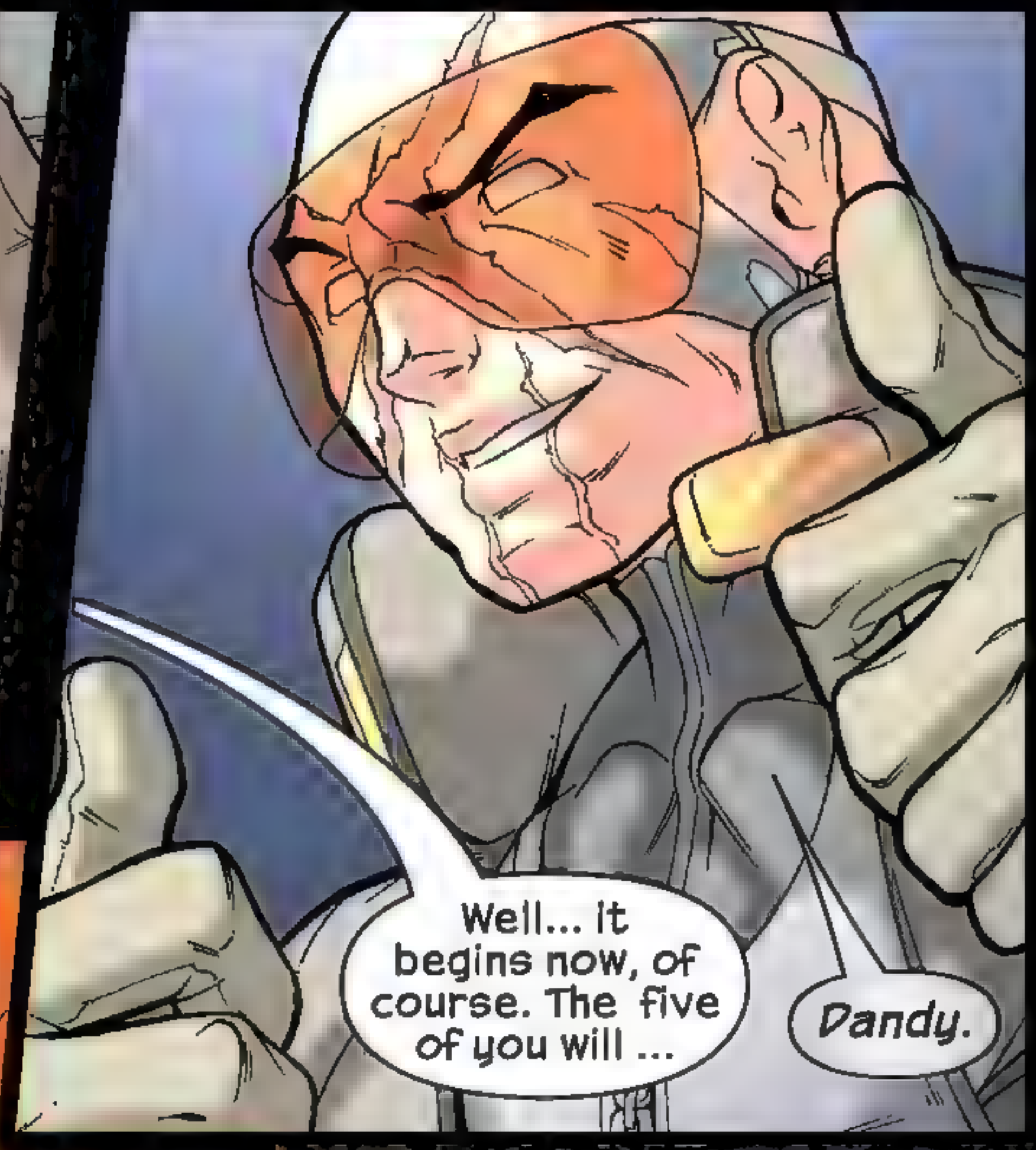
Pity the poor dope they use as bait.



Meet the objective, nullify the target, return within 48 hours. That's affirmative.

...a routine extraction, and I shall claim the exorbitant fee... heh heh...

Uh...excuse me, when does the competition start?



Well... it begins now, of course. The five of you will ...

Dandy.



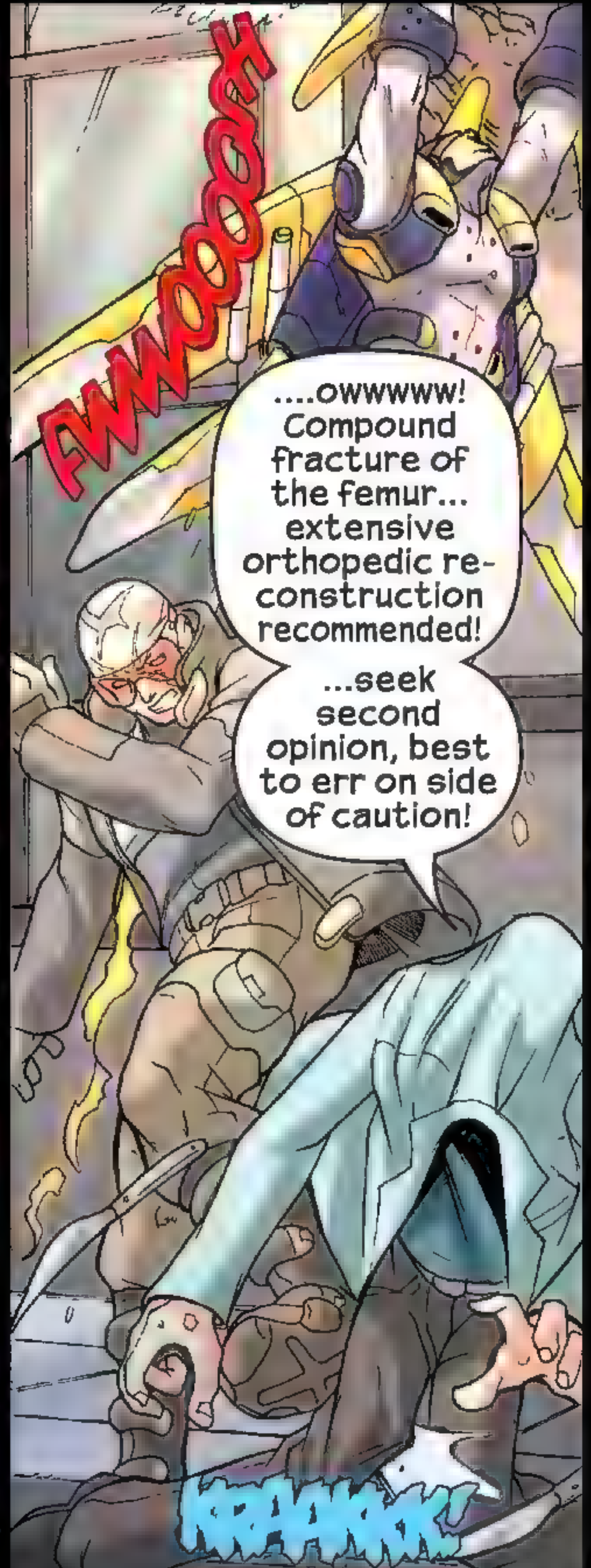
...eh...?

...vision impaired...!

Hey! What are you doing, Mister?



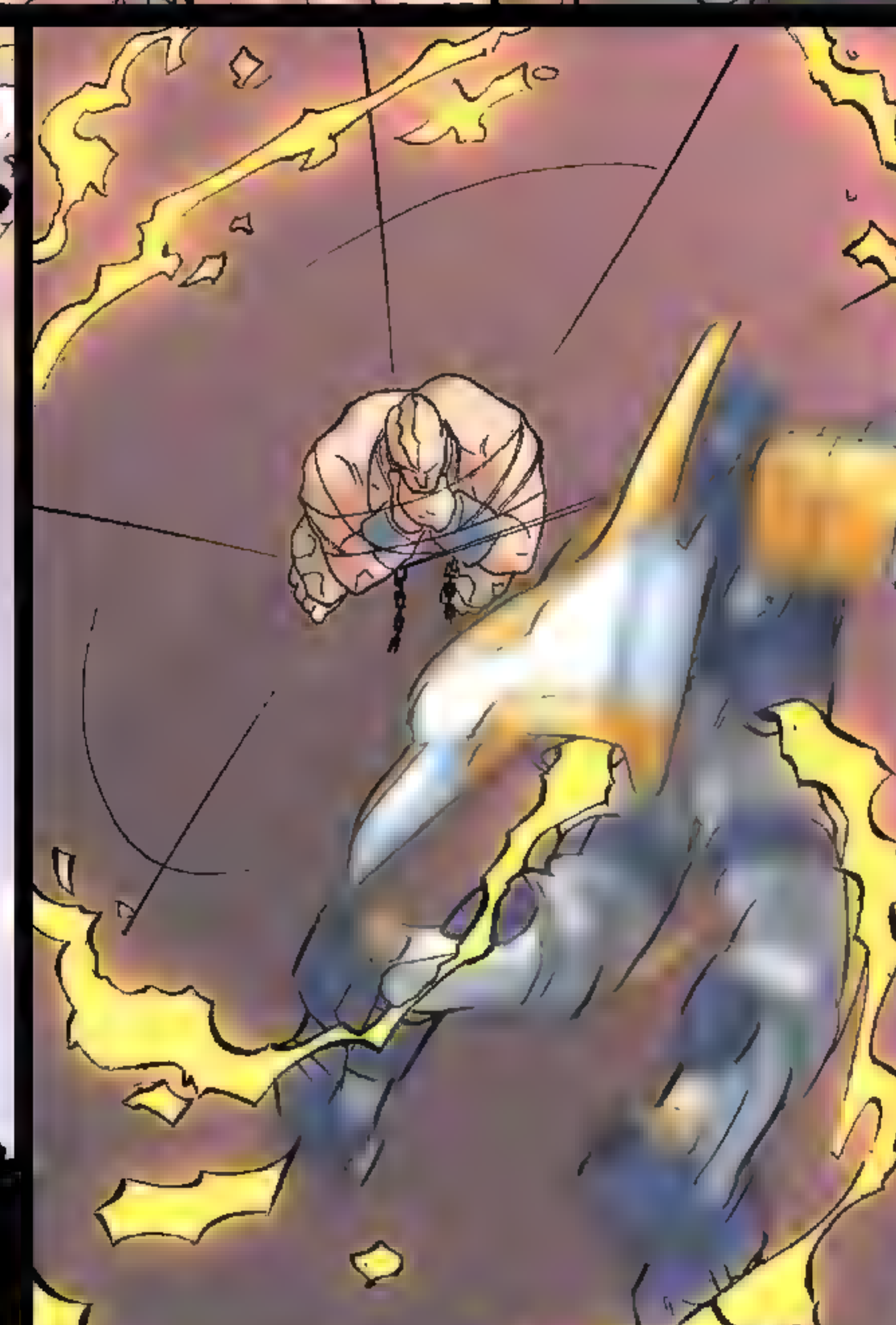
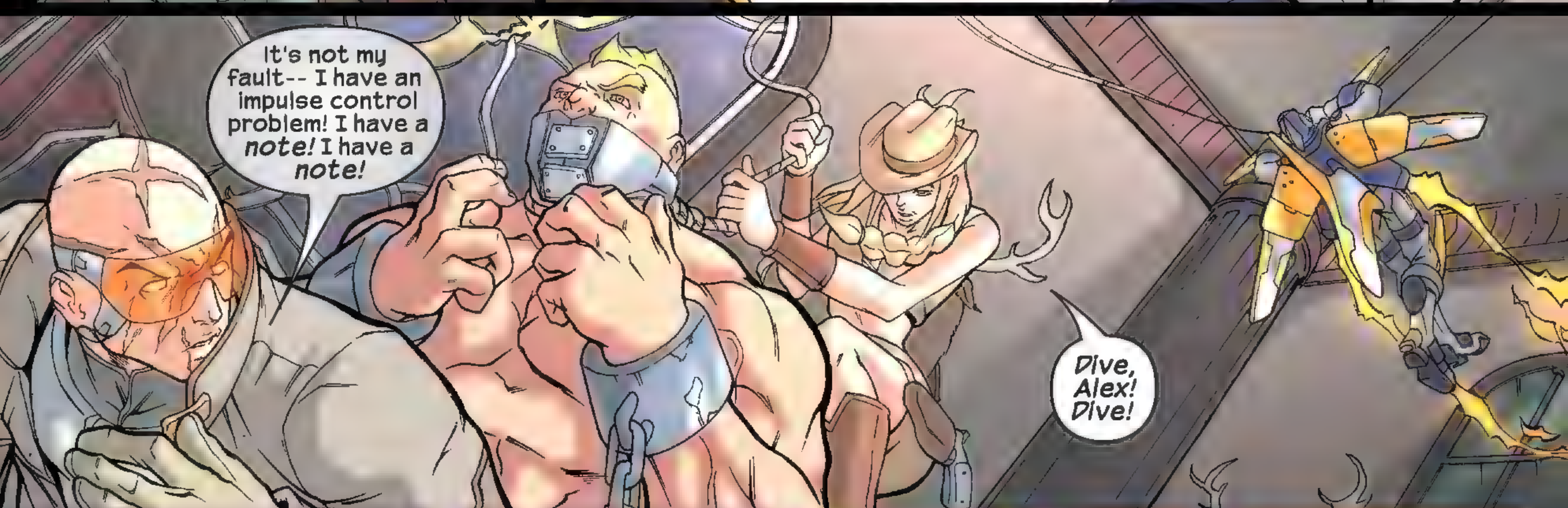
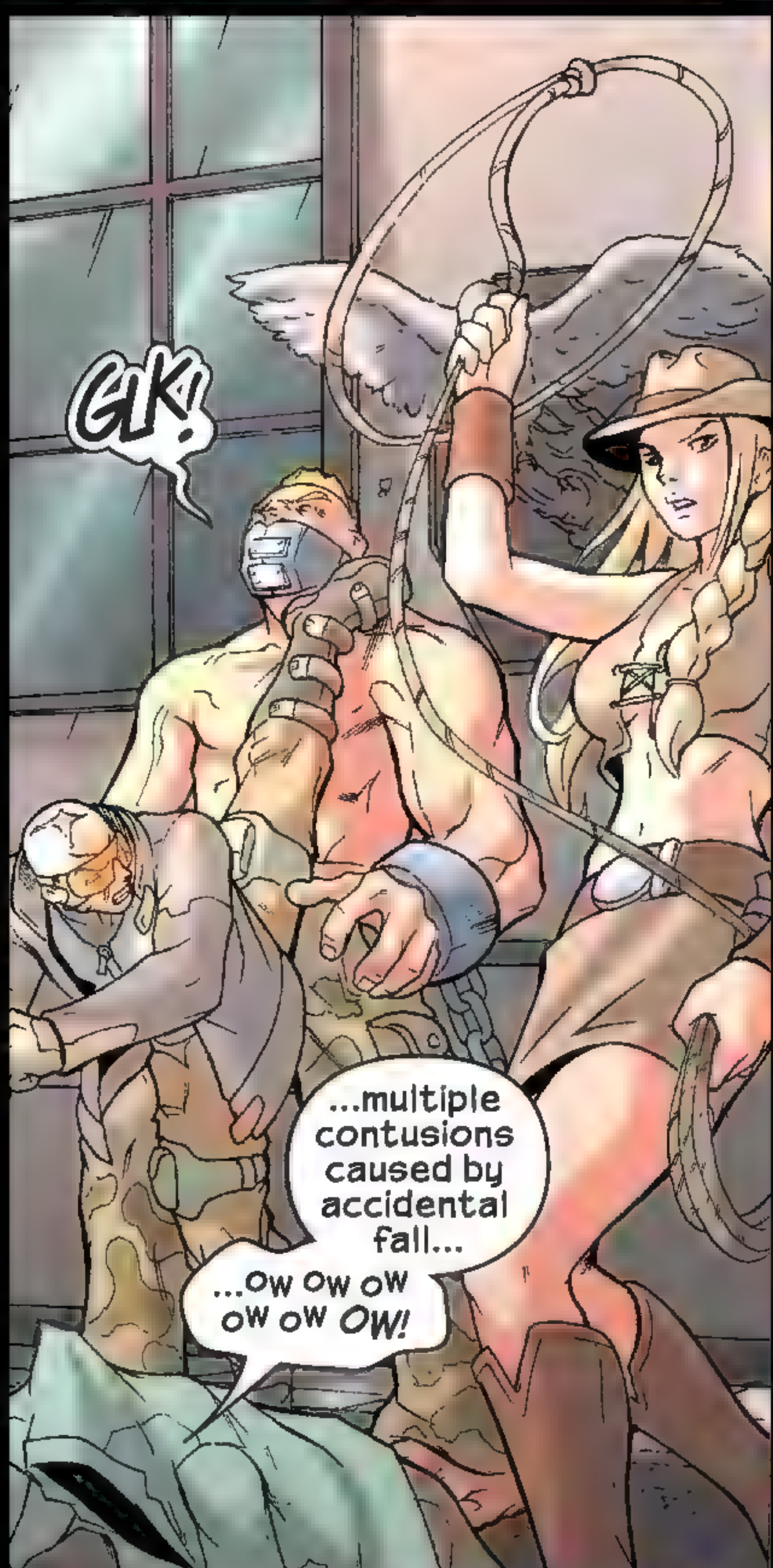
KLK

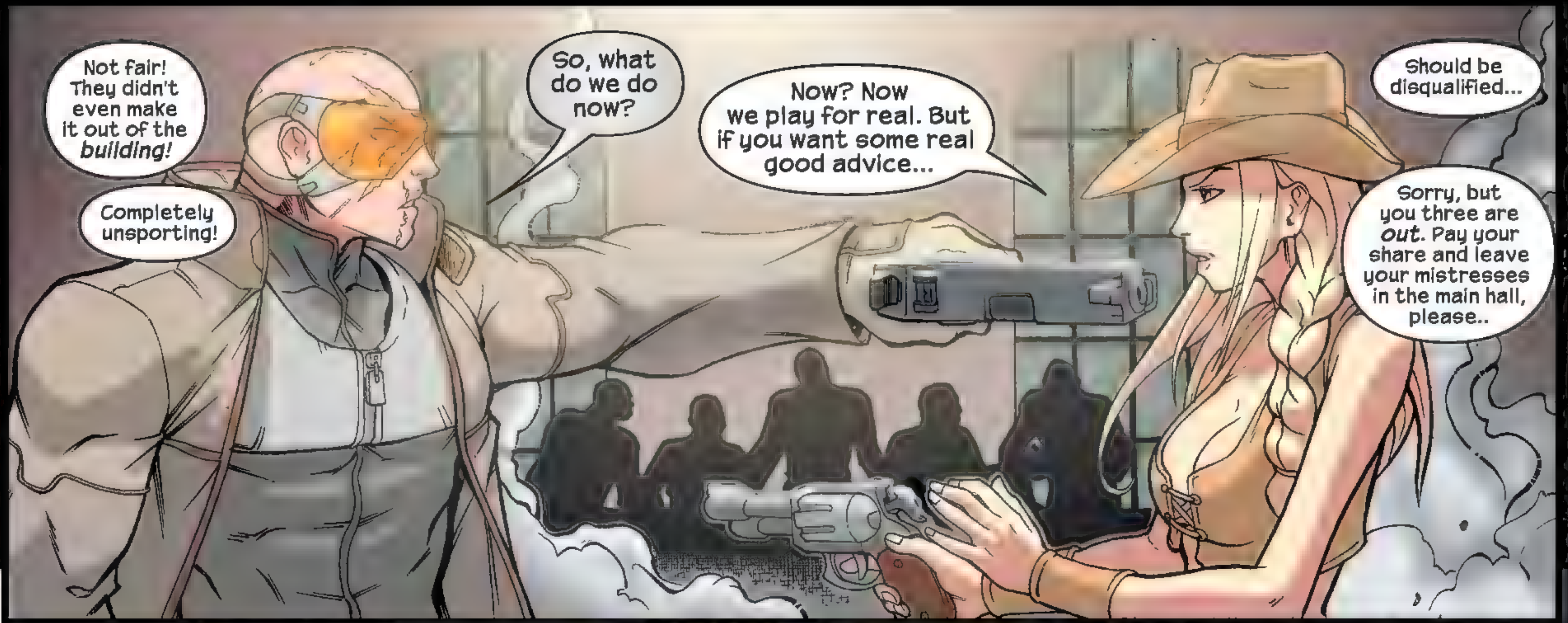


....owwww! Compound fracture of the femur... extensive orthopedic reconstruction recommended!

...seek second opinion, best to err on side of caution!

KRAKK!





Not fair!
They didn't
even make
it out of the
building!

Completely
unsporting!

So, what
do we do
now?

Now? Now
we play for real. But
if you want some real
good advice...

Should be
disqualified...

Sorry, but
you three are
out. Pay your
share and leave
your mistresses
in the main hall,
please..



...you can't beat me,
and you sure as hell can't
beat the Punisher...

...go
home, Alex.
You ain't
ready for
this.



The hell
I'm *not*.

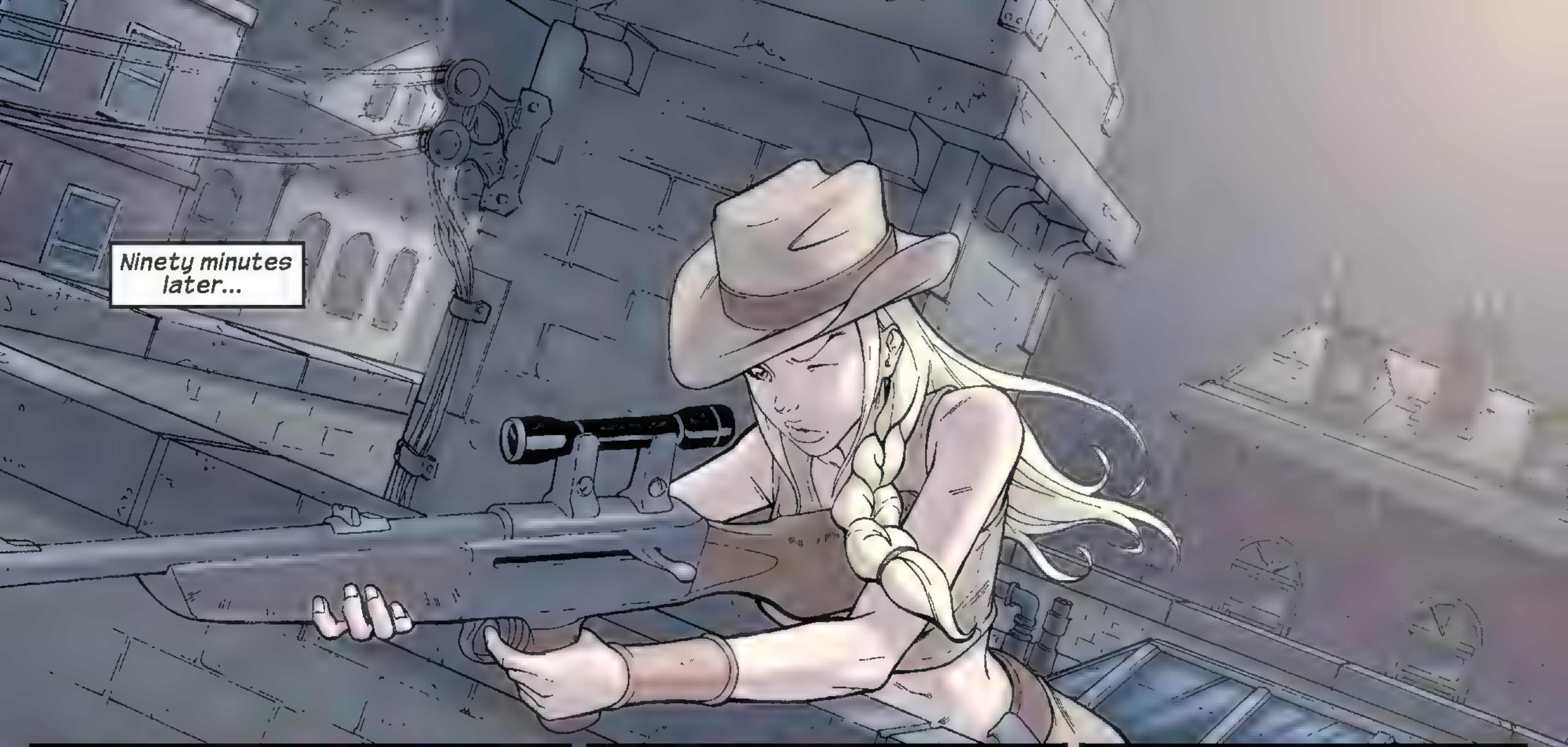
...whimper!
whine...! cry!

Oh,
shut
up.



Thanks a
dumplod,
Outlaw.

Tasky's not gonna be
too happy about *this*.



Ninety minutes later...



Yep. That's you, ain't it?
Found the bait, I see.



Adios, big scary
Punisher
man.



WHOOOOOAA!

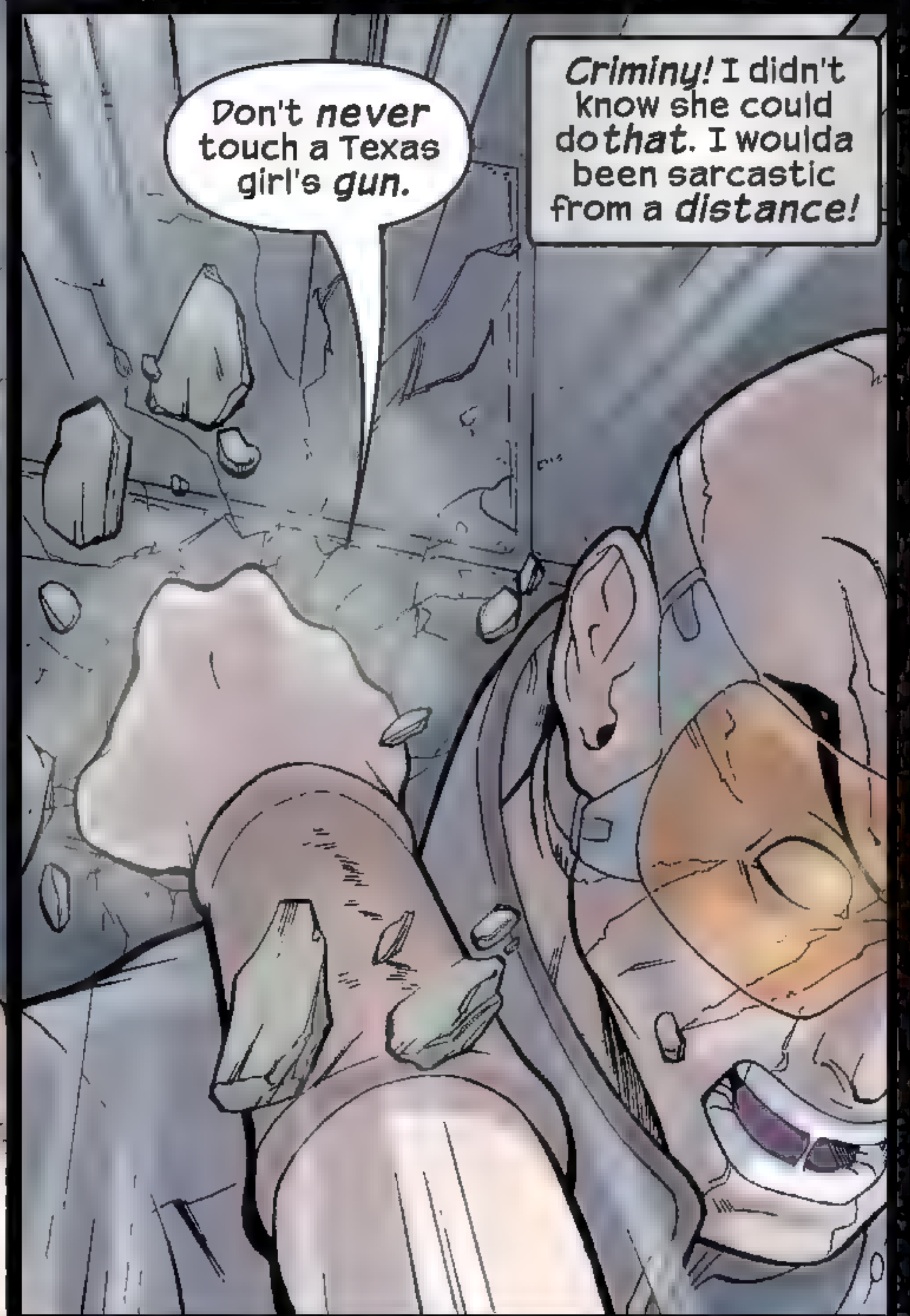
Hey!
Miss
me?



You owe
me *cab fare*,
Outlaw.

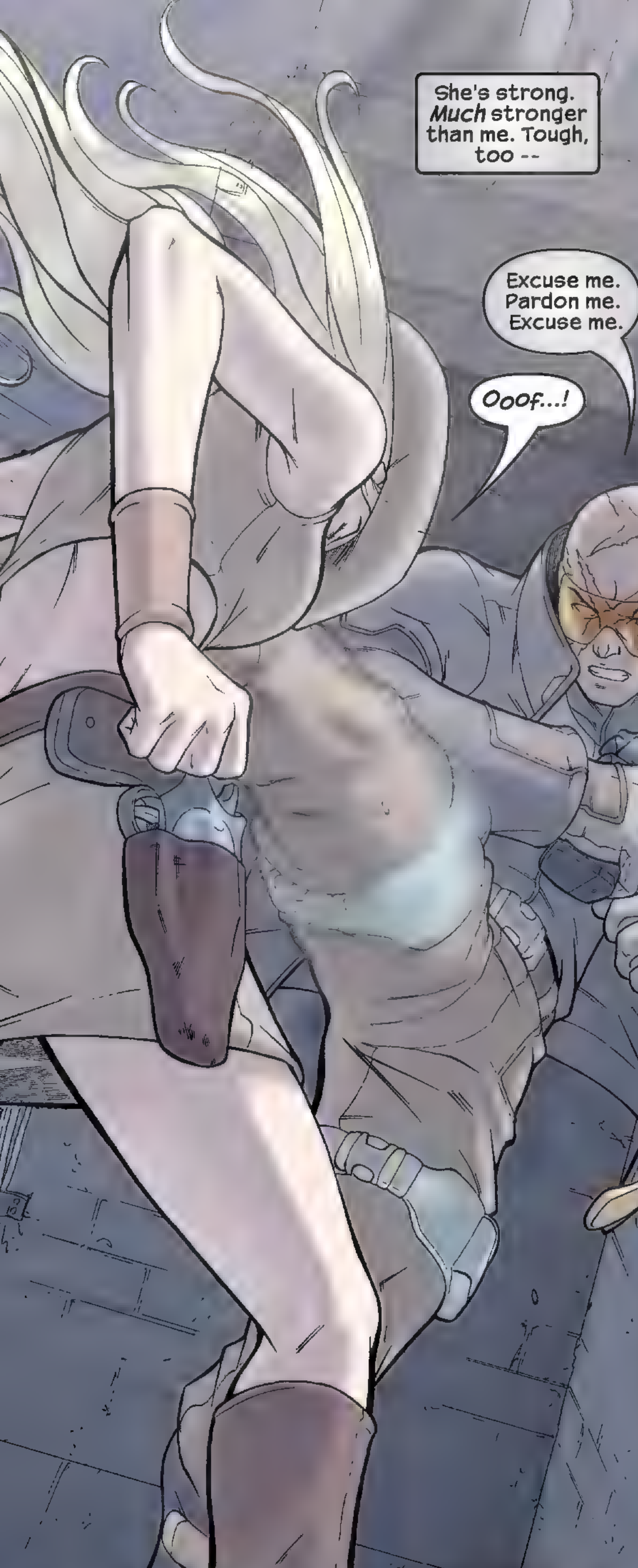
Nice gun. Bet
the *cacti* around
your place are
terrified.

Alex, one
thing you'd best
learn, pronto...



Don't *never*
touch a Texas
girl's gun.

Criminy! I didn't
know she could
do *that*. I woulda
been sarcastic
from a *distance!*



She's strong.
Much stronger
than me. Tough,
too --

Excuse me.
Pardon me.
Excuse me.

Ooof...!



--but not
completely
bullet-
proof, looks
like.

Aaaak.



Urrk...
now I...
...know why
they...

...call
you...
Crazy
Inez.

I told
you, Alex--



awkk...
Kkaa

Don't
CALL me
that.

This
bounty's *mine*,
greenhorn.



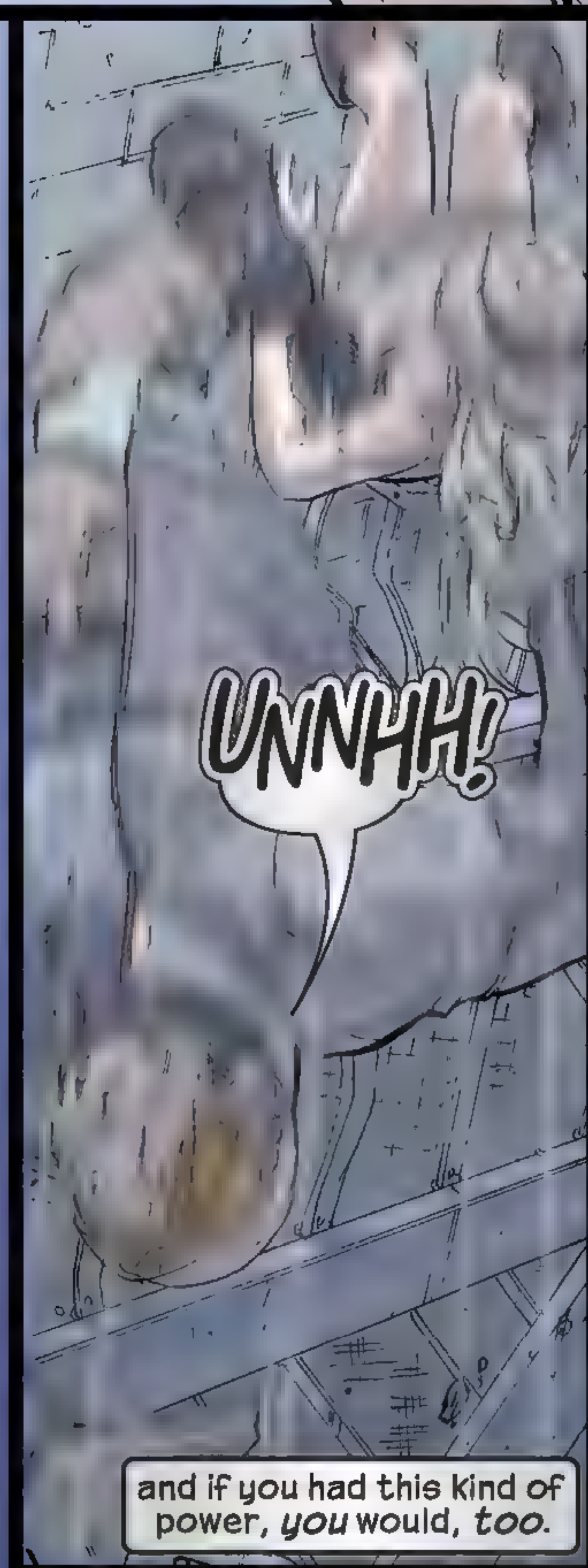
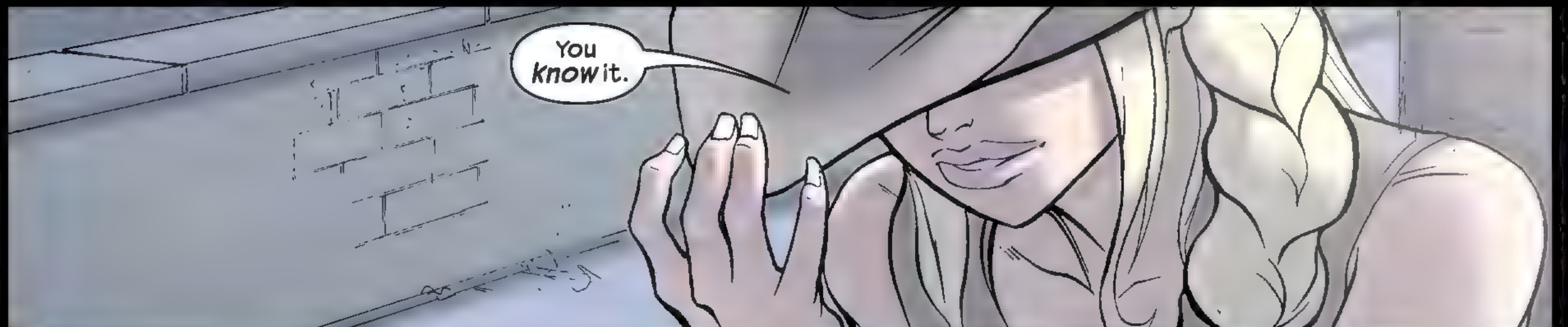
...kaff...there
will be a...brief
intermission...
while I...

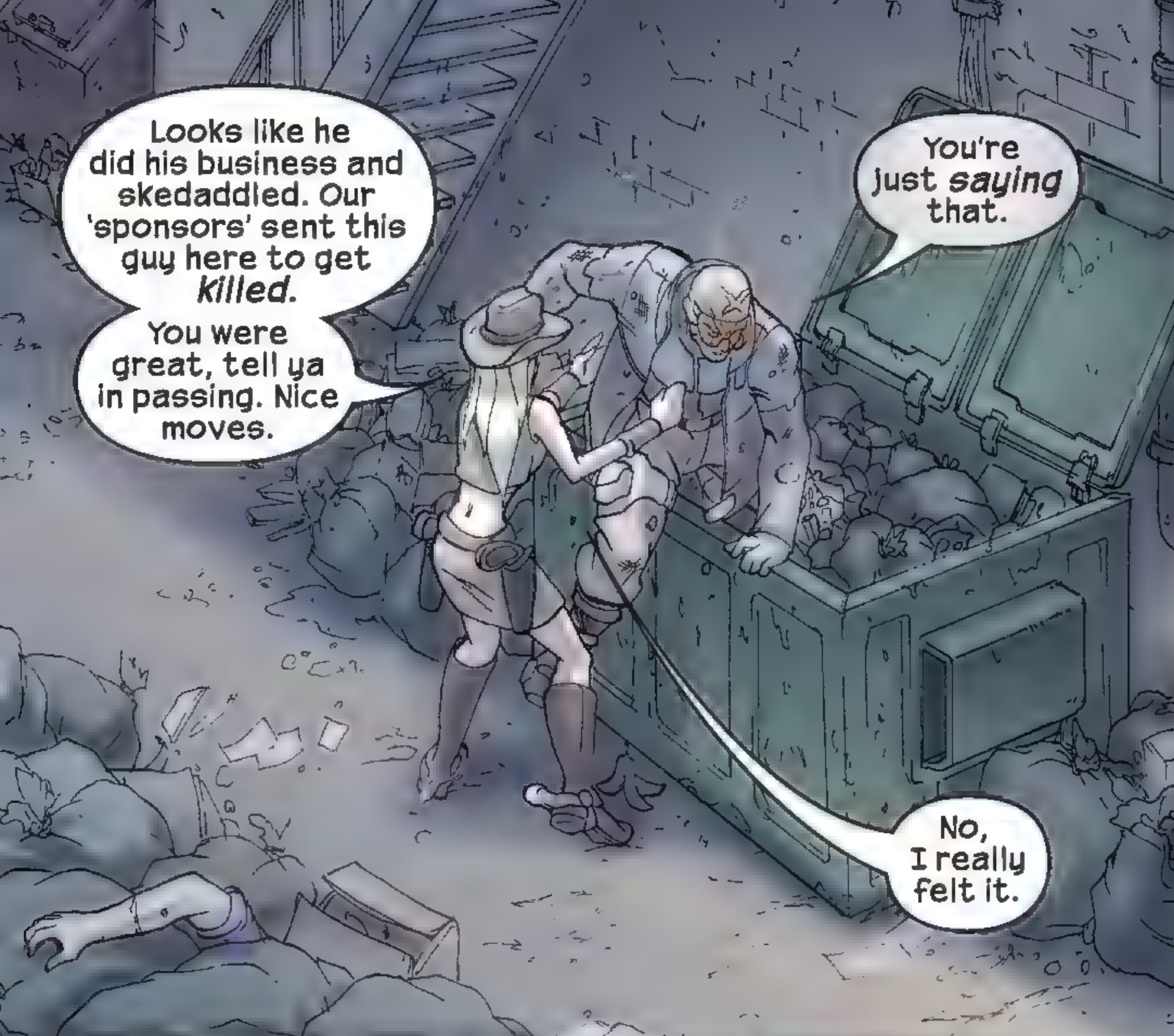
...grow a new
larynx. ~kaff
kaff!~



Shhhh! I'm gonna tell you a
secret. This is something the
Avengers won't tell you.

You know *why* it is that when two
super-powered individuals meet,
they *invariably* wind up fighting?





Looks like he did his business and skedaddled. Our 'sponsors' sent this guy here to get killed.

You were great, tell ya in passing. Nice moves.

You're just *saying* that.

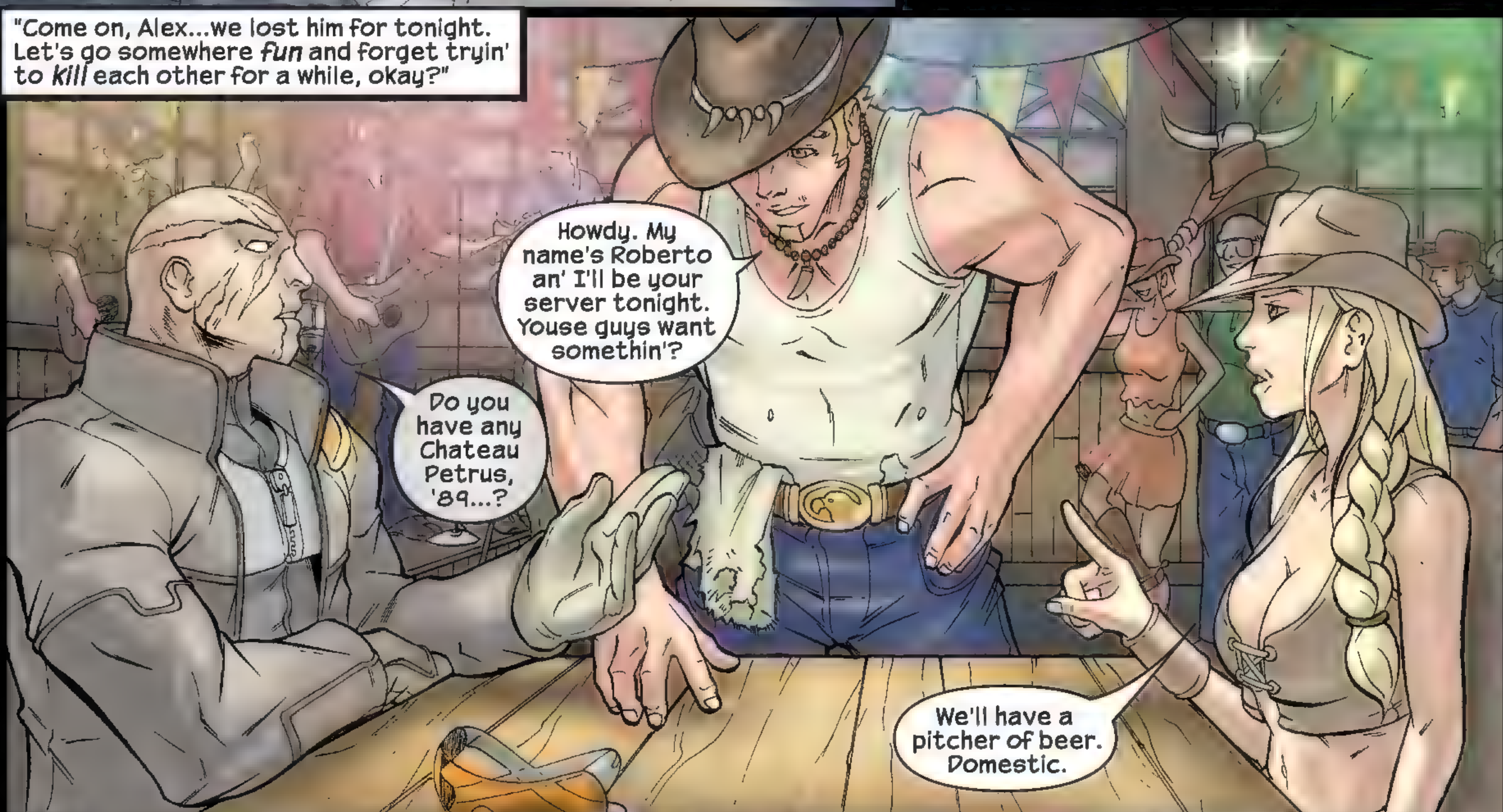
No, I really felt it.



You didn't have your guns, and you knew I was stronger. You coulda quit.

So, I'm kinda proud right now, fact is.

"Come on, Alex...we lost him for tonight. Let's go somewhere *fun* and forget tryin' to *kill* each other for a while, okay?"



Howdy. My name's Roberto an' I'll be your server tonight. Youse guys want somethin'?

Do you have any Chateau Petrus, '89...?

We'll have a pitcher of beer. Domestic.



Your eyes are bleedin' again.

With this music, I'm surprised my *ears* aren't bleeding.

I don't get why the guy singing has to keep telling me about his damn *truck*.



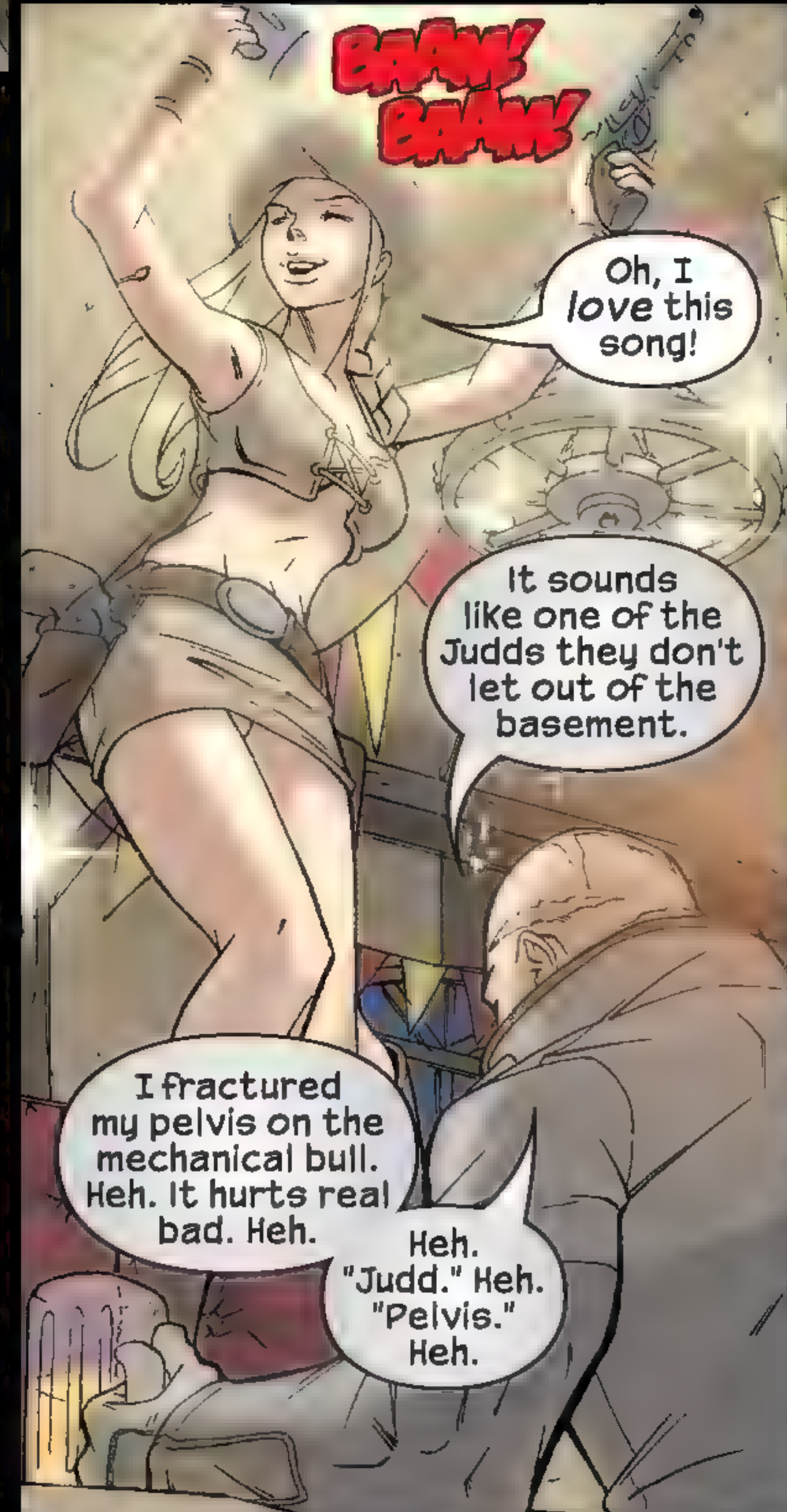
Isn't all this a little desperate, Outlaw? I mean, it's all fairy tale stuff anyway, isn't it?

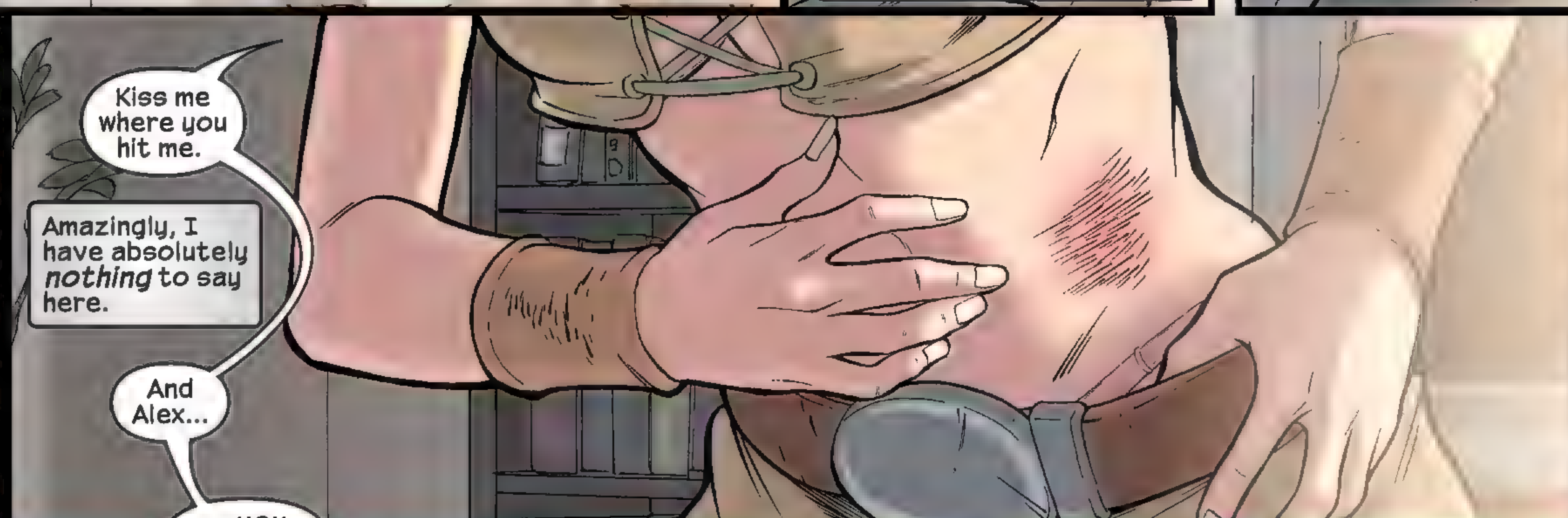
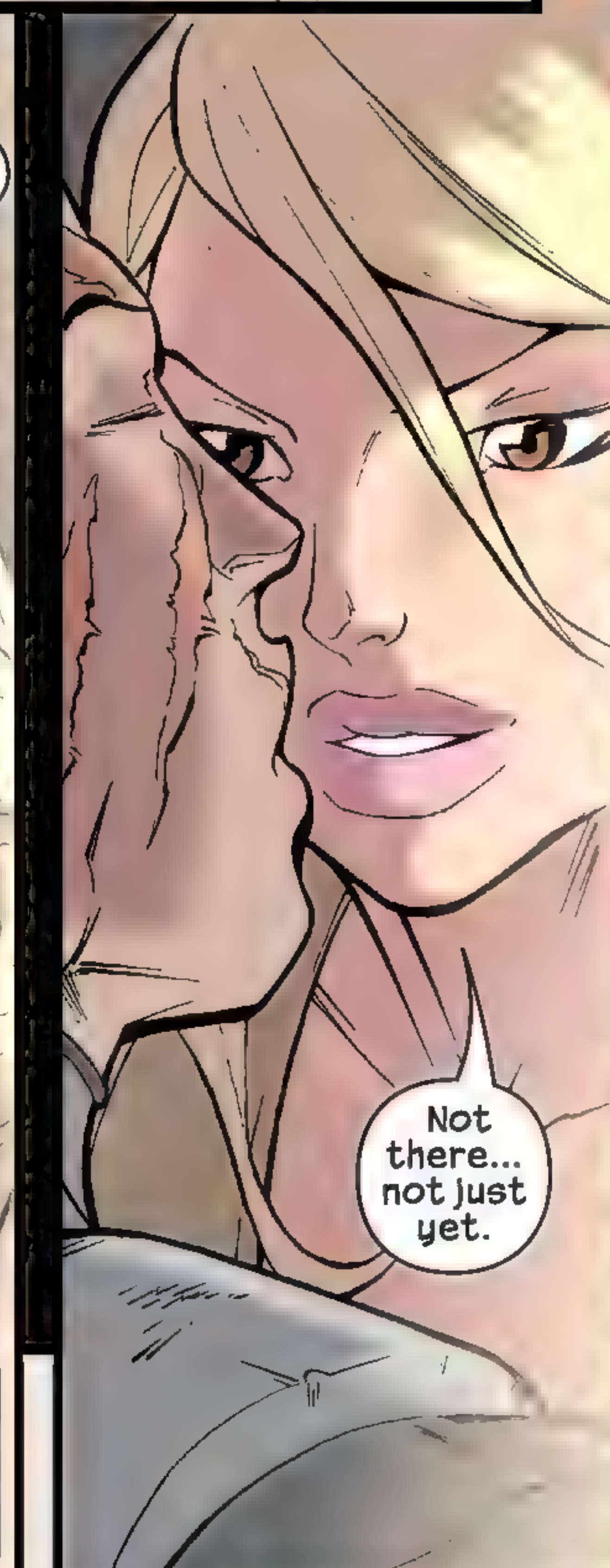
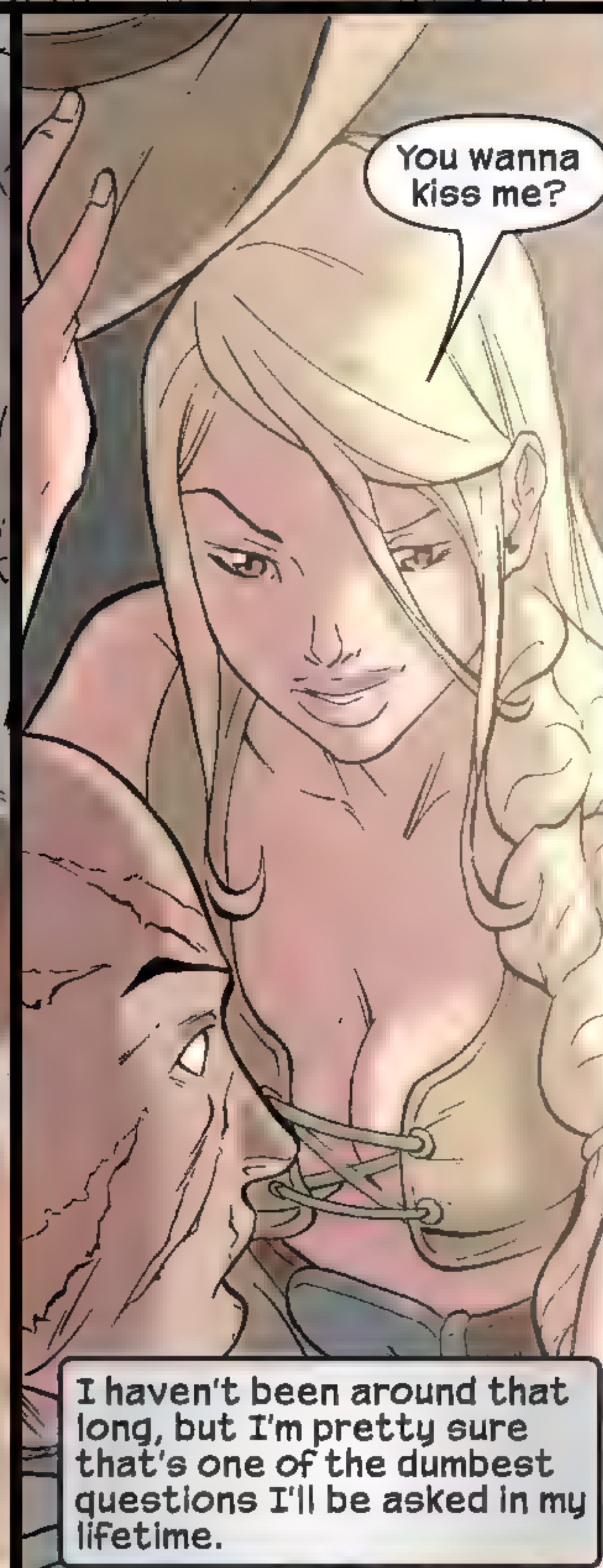
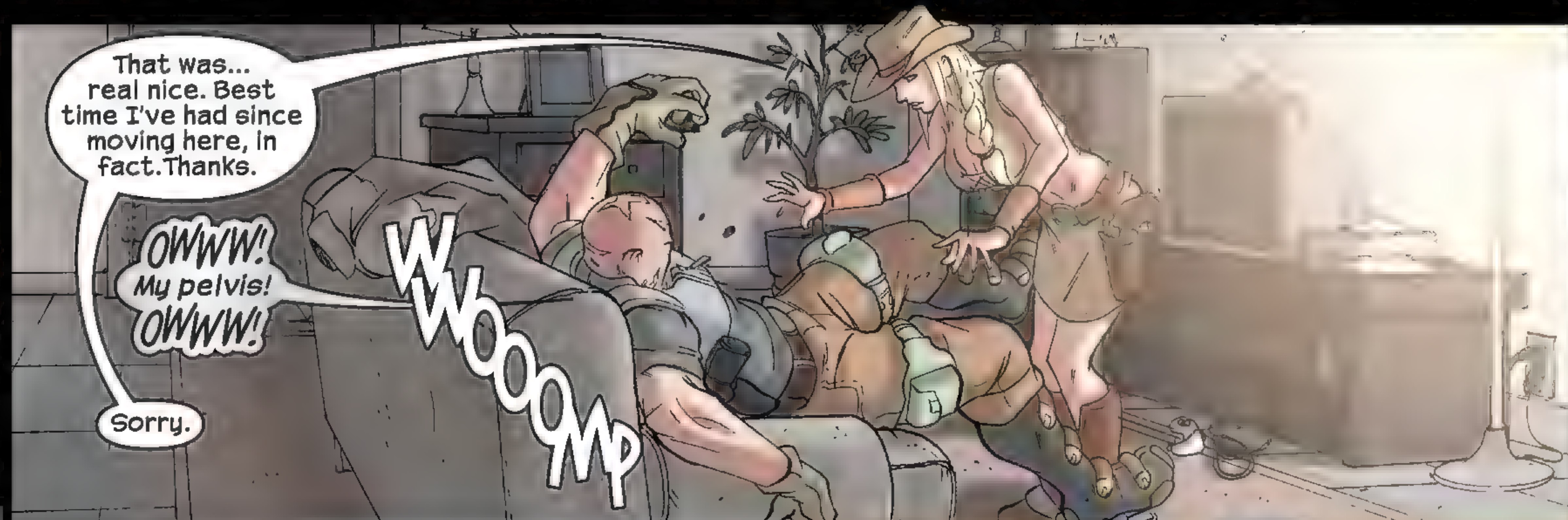
Not where I come from, it's not.

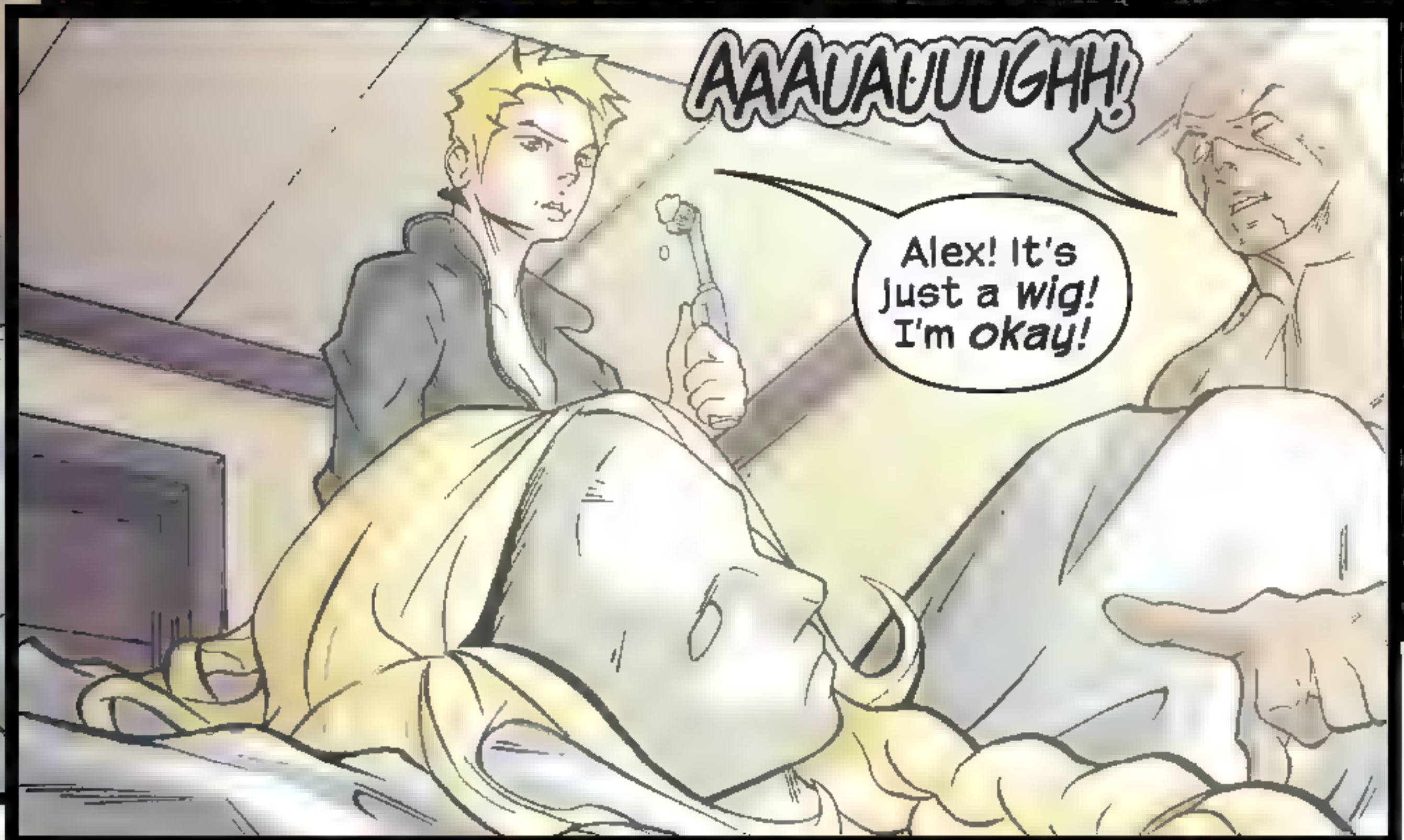
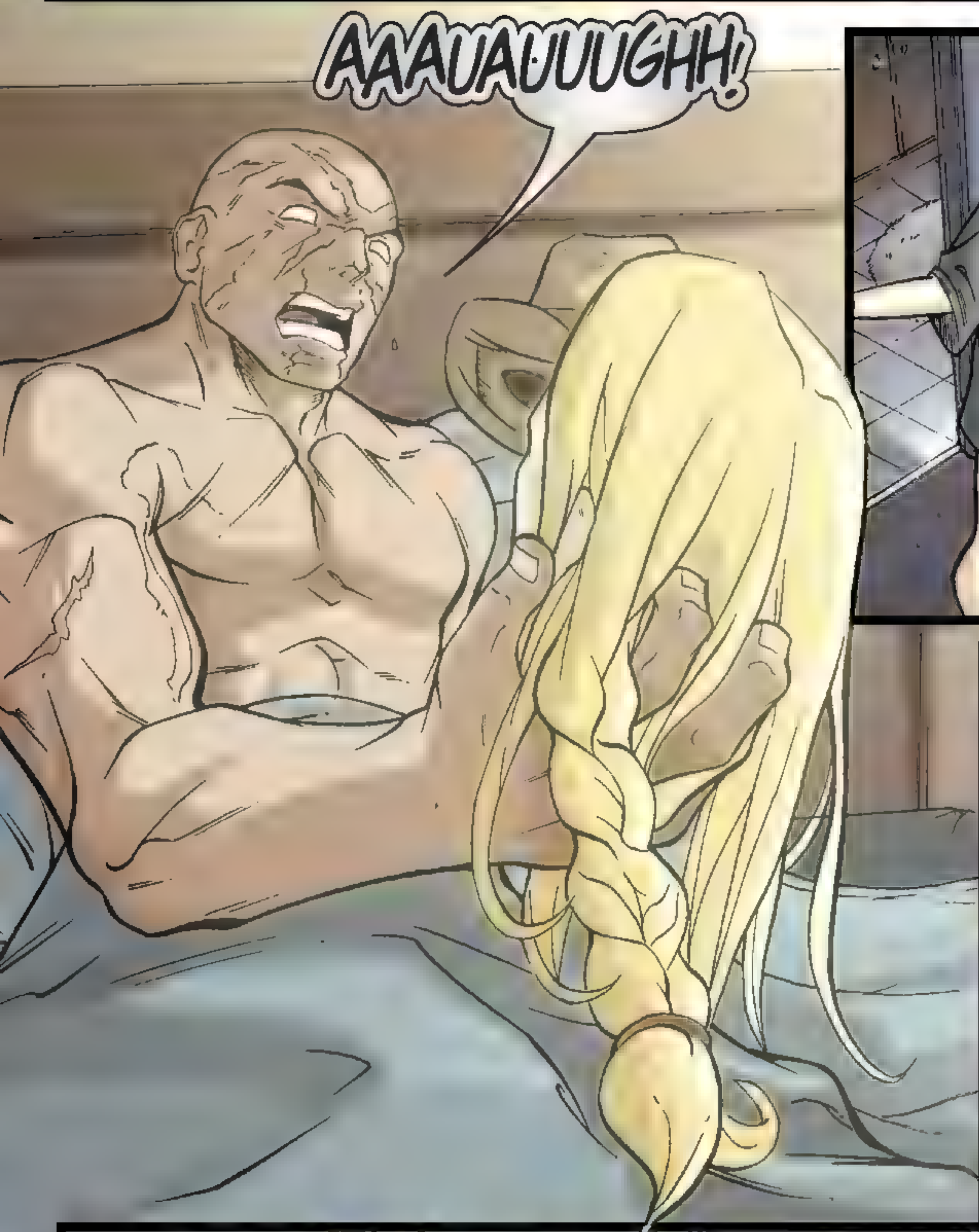
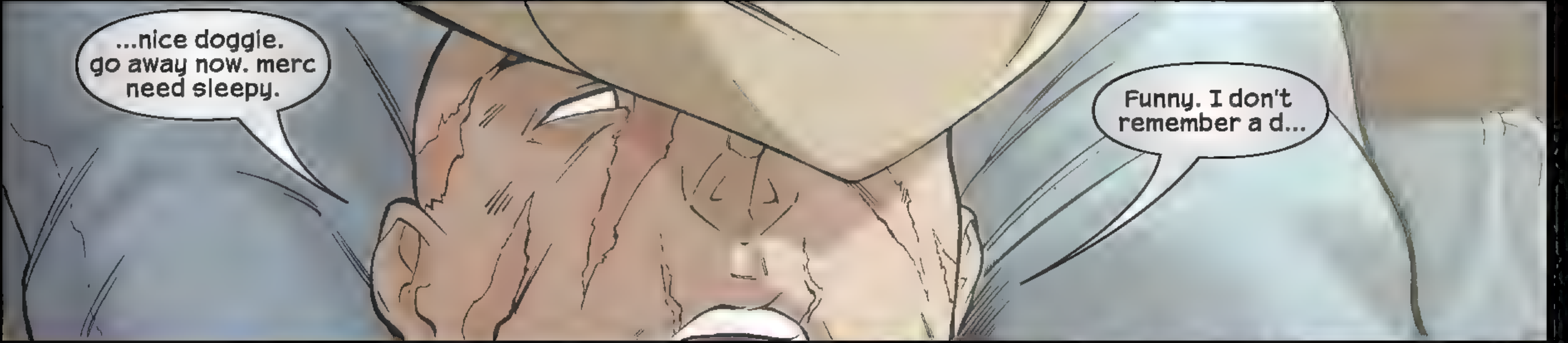
I know this seems silly. Most of these boys ain't never been out of the city, let alone been in the saddle.

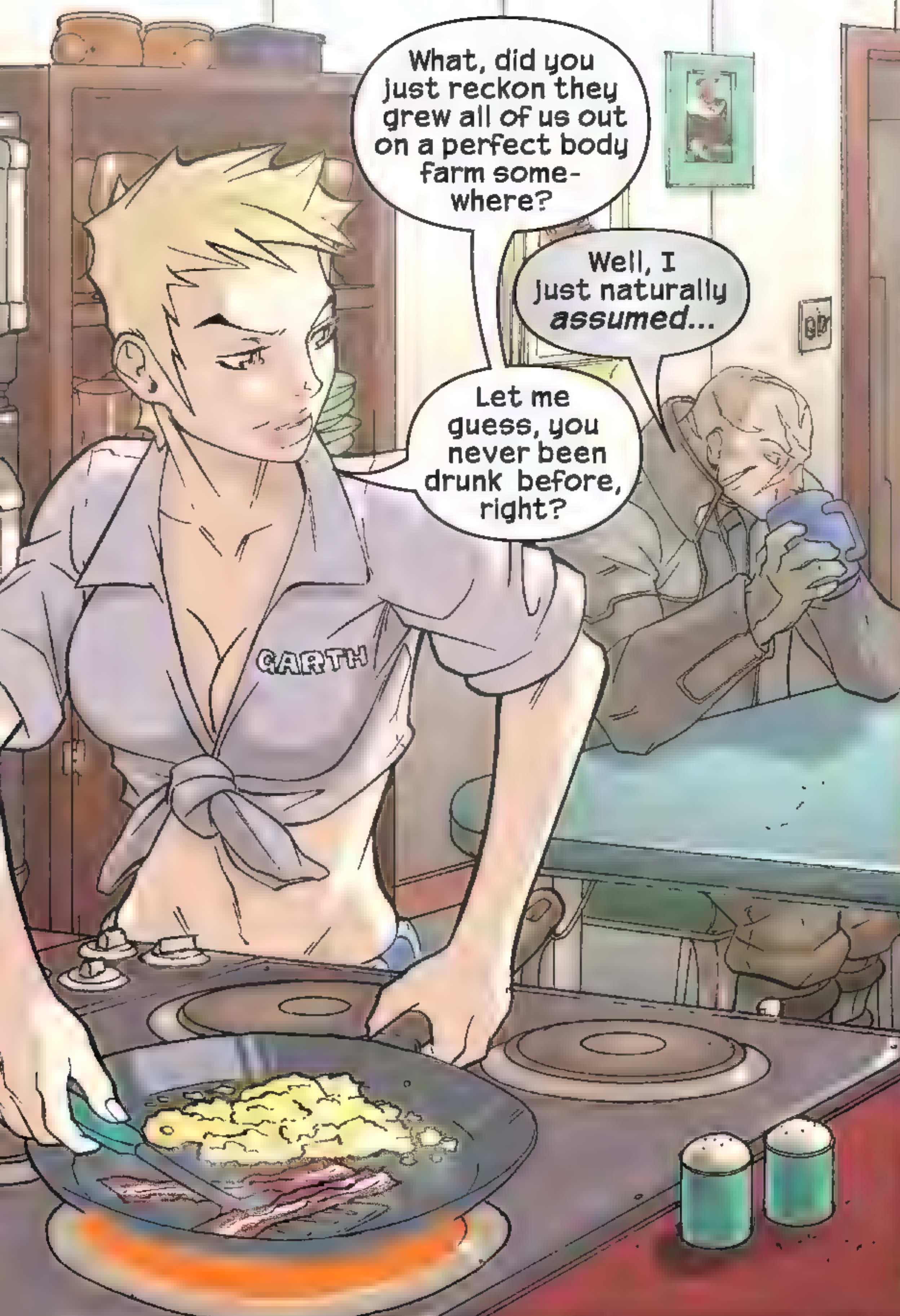
But comin' here makes me a little less lonesome for home.

Well then, ma'am... I believe it's my sworn duty as a genuine pretend-for-one-night cowboy to show you a good time, Texas-style.





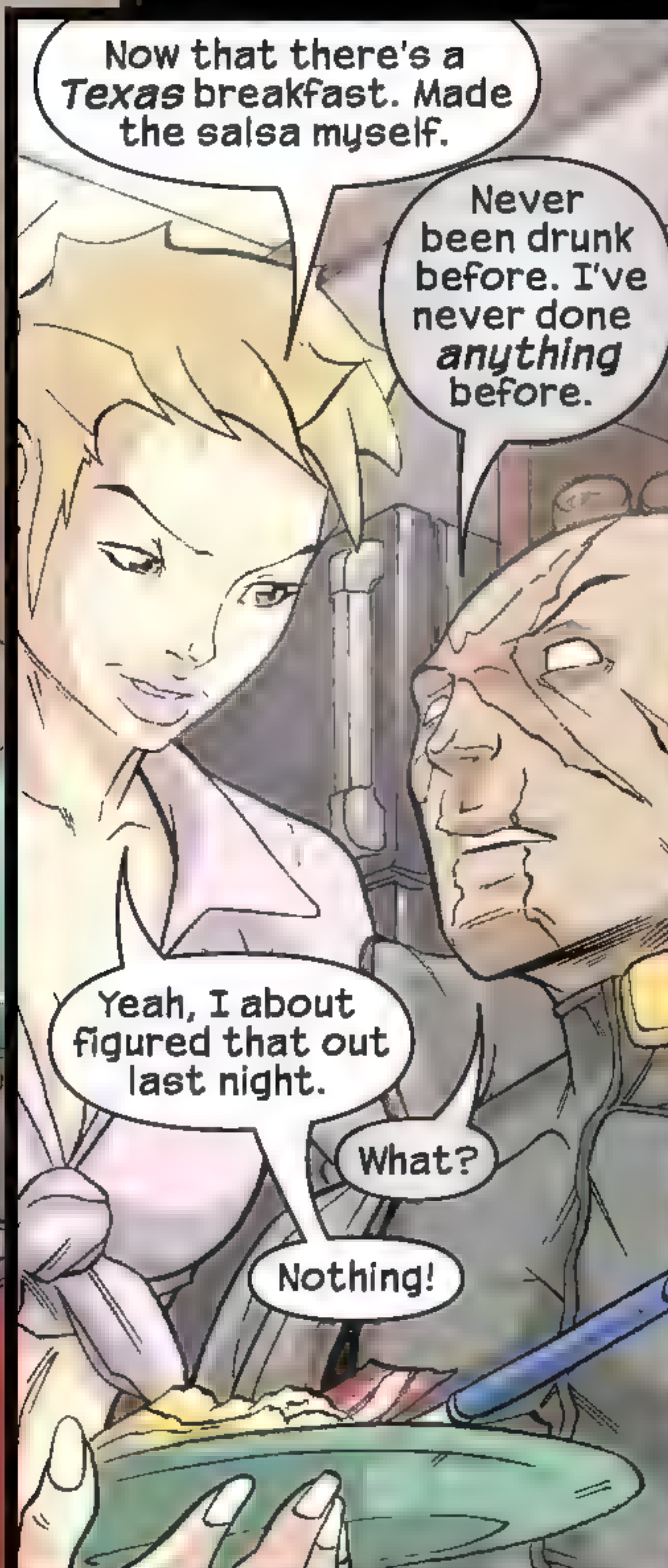




What, did you just reckon they grew all of us out on a perfect body farm somewhere?

Well, I just naturally *assumed*...

Let me guess, you never been drunk before, right?



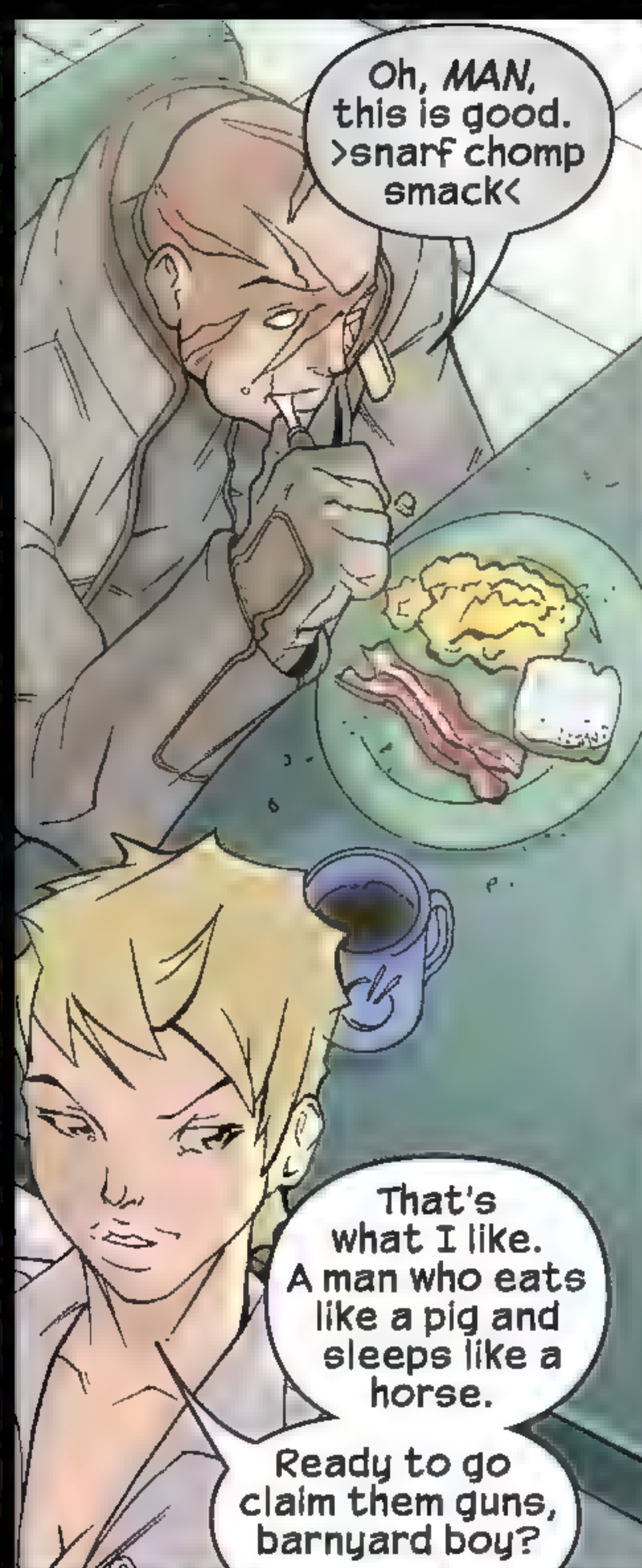
Now that there's a *Texas* breakfast. Made the salsa myself.

Never been drunk before. I've never done *anything* before.

Yeah, I about figured that out last night.

What?

Nothing!



Oh, *MAN*, this is good. >snarf chomp smack<

That's what I like. A man who eats like a pig and sleeps like a horse.

Ready to go claim them guns, barnyard boy?



What? But...how?

I called around. I got a lead on where the big man's hidin'. Apt to be a good bit dangerous.

We're going. You gonna wear that big she-toupee?



Like *you* should talk. You look like you got run over by a waffle iron. But I'm startin' to take a shine to you, anyways.

Well, then let's go get those pistols and be the most dangerous freaks at the ball, what do you say?



That's it... he's leaving his apartment.

Simple smash and grab, and get out before the big bad Punisher even knows we're *there*. I don't know why we didn't think of this *before*.



Careful, Alex-- that there door's more'n likely...



...booby-trapped.

Several deadly booby traps later...

Well, dang. He's got every kinda weapon in here short of a set of Ginsu knives--

--But no .45s.

Hey, there's a loose board in here...

Come on, come on...daddy needs a place to keep his elephant.

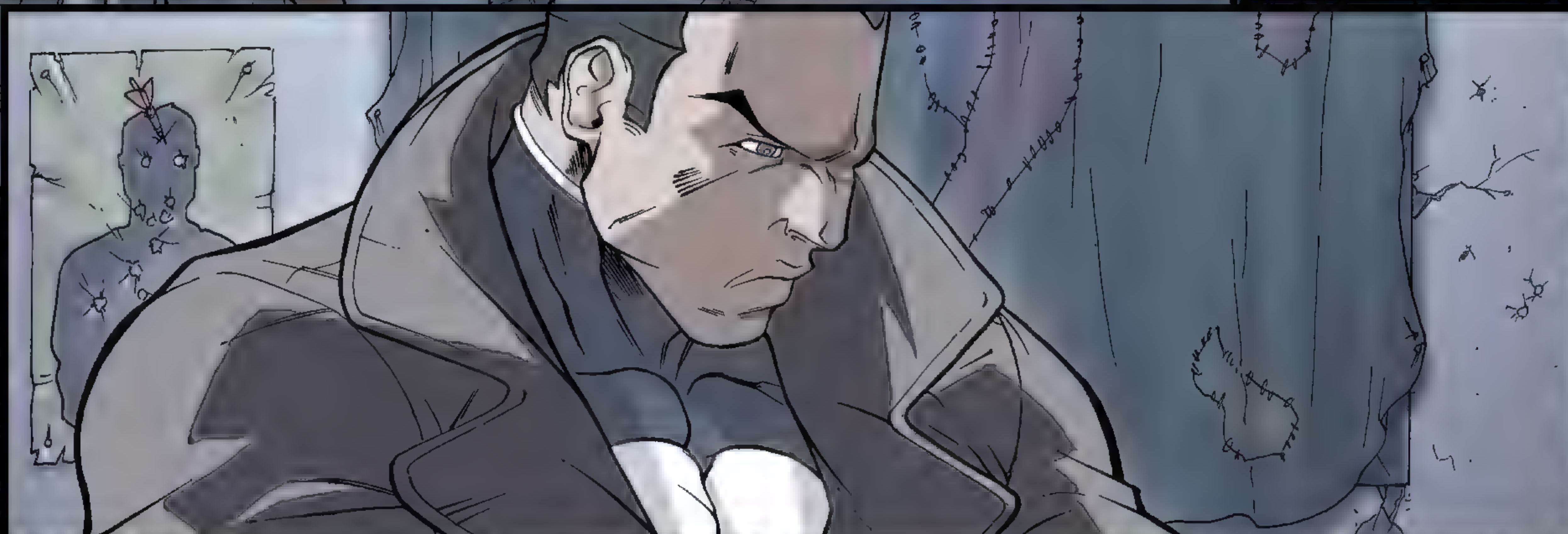
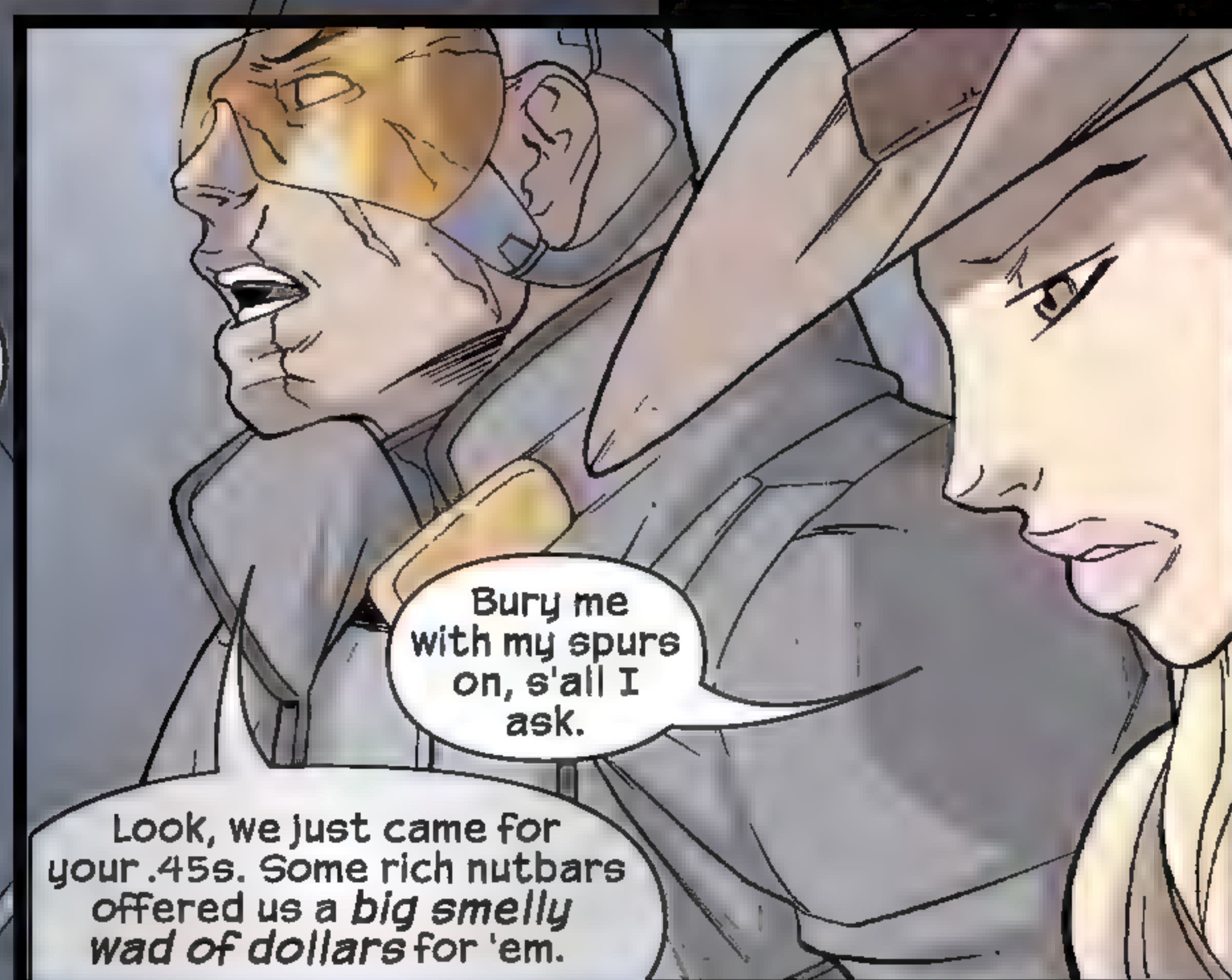
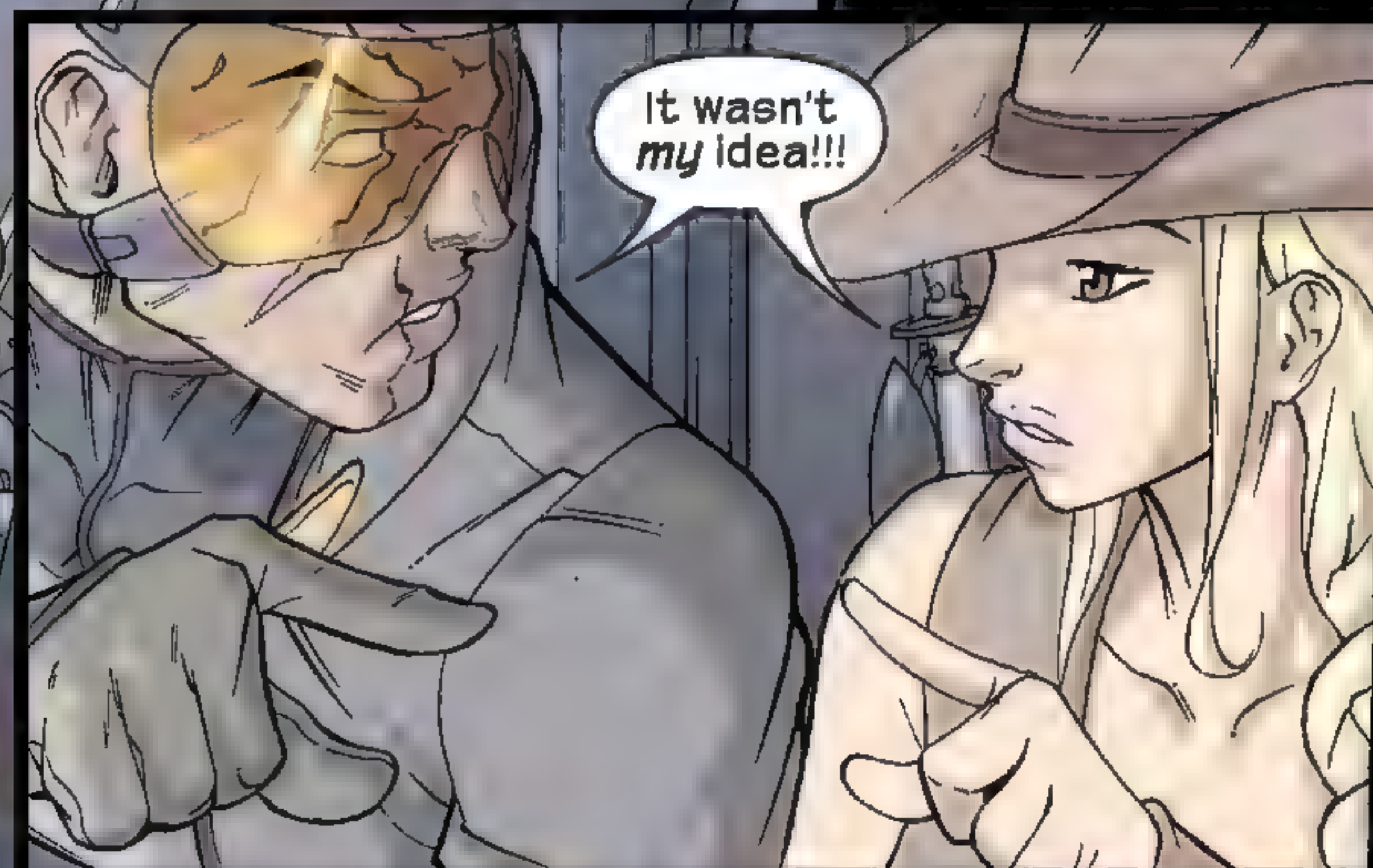
Any automatics at all?

Found the ammo-- semijacketed high velocity-- most destructive load a .45'll take.

No .45s, though.



Looking for
these?





Oh, thank God, Alex--I'm so *relieved!* When you didn't come home last night, or call...

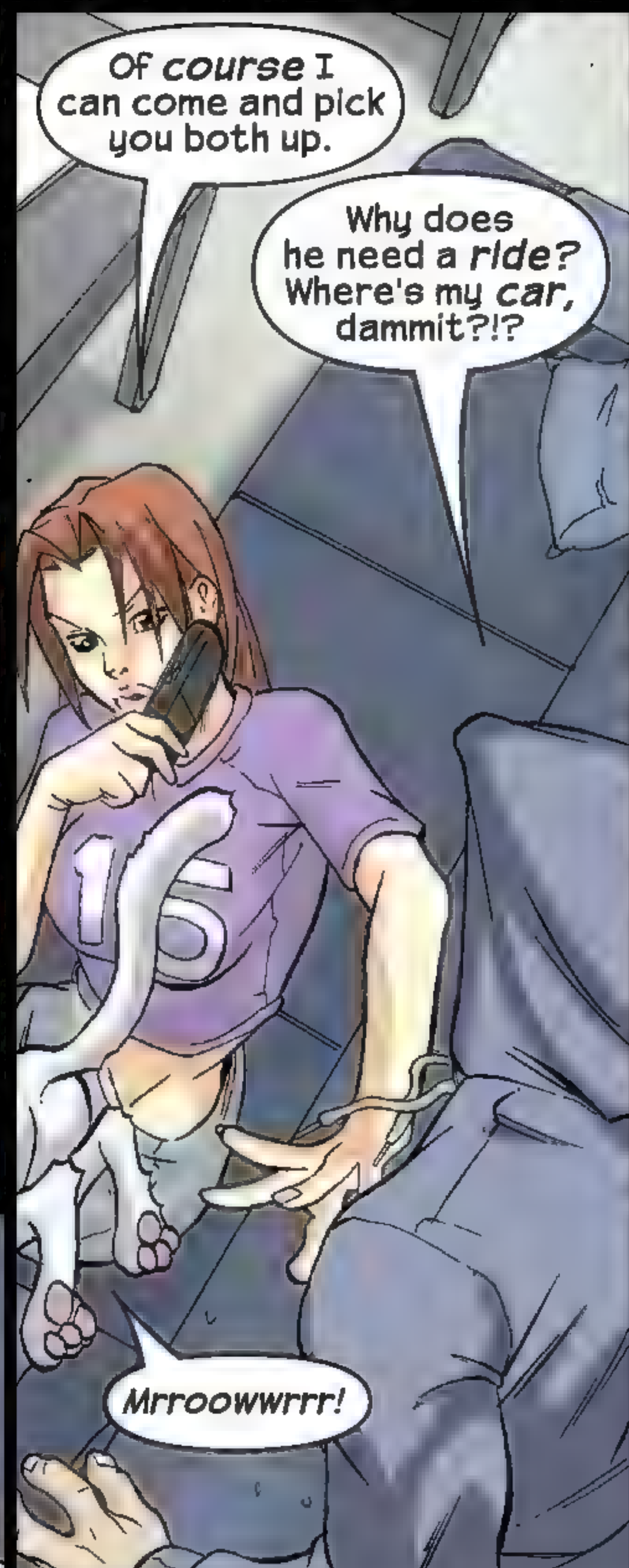
Ask him if my car's all right.



What? The Punisher collected the bounty *himself?*

Tell him he better not have damaged my car...

purrr purrr



Of course I can come and pick you both up.

Why does he need a *ride?* Where's my *car*, dammit?!?

Mrroowwrrr!



Yeah, this is sort of embarrassing, but he stole Outlaw's *car* to go get the bounty *himself*.

That's not *all* he stole, the big *jerk!*

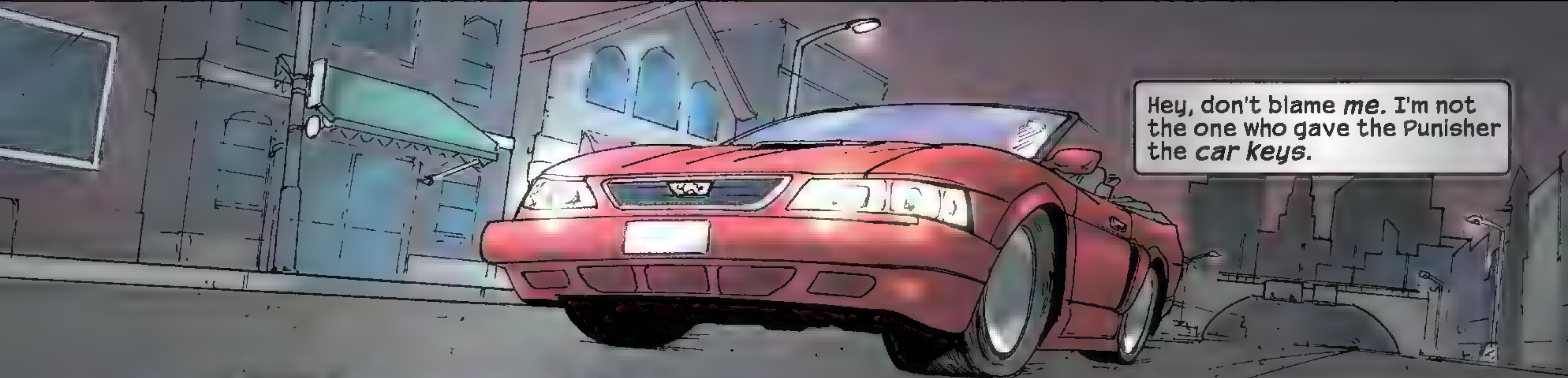
Yeah, and one more thing, Sandi.



Could you maybe bring us both some *clothes?*

You're a *real fun date*, Alex, you know that?

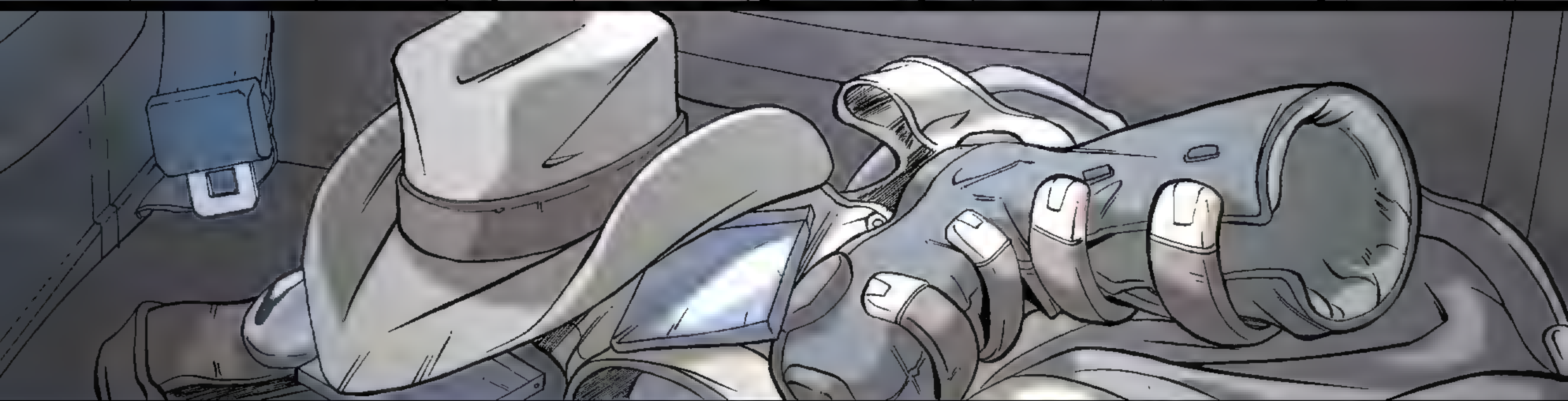
TELEPHONE



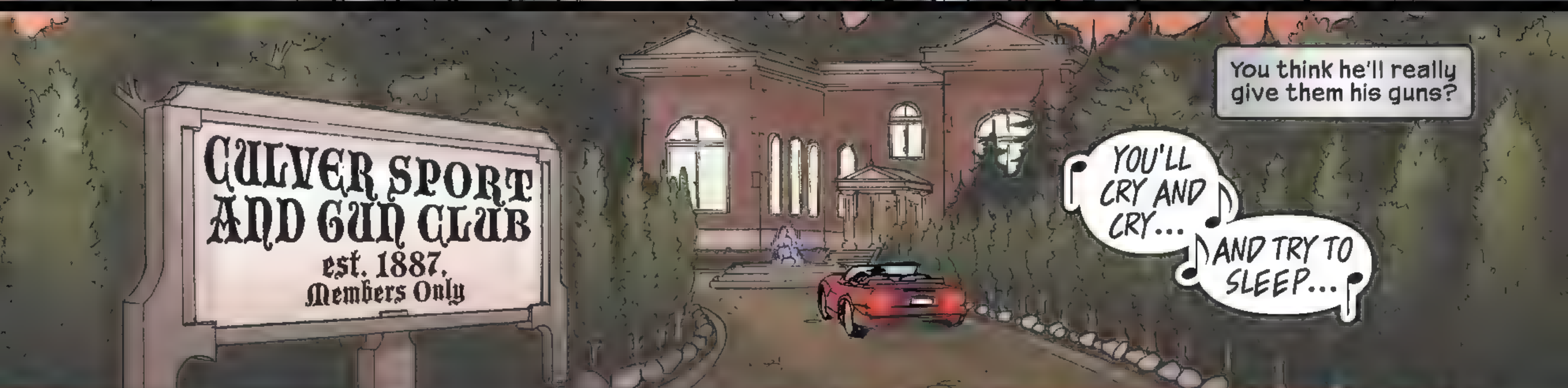
Hey, don't blame *me*. I'm not the one who gave the Punisher the *car keys*.



Wonder how he's gonna feel knowing those gun club guys set him up to be shot at?



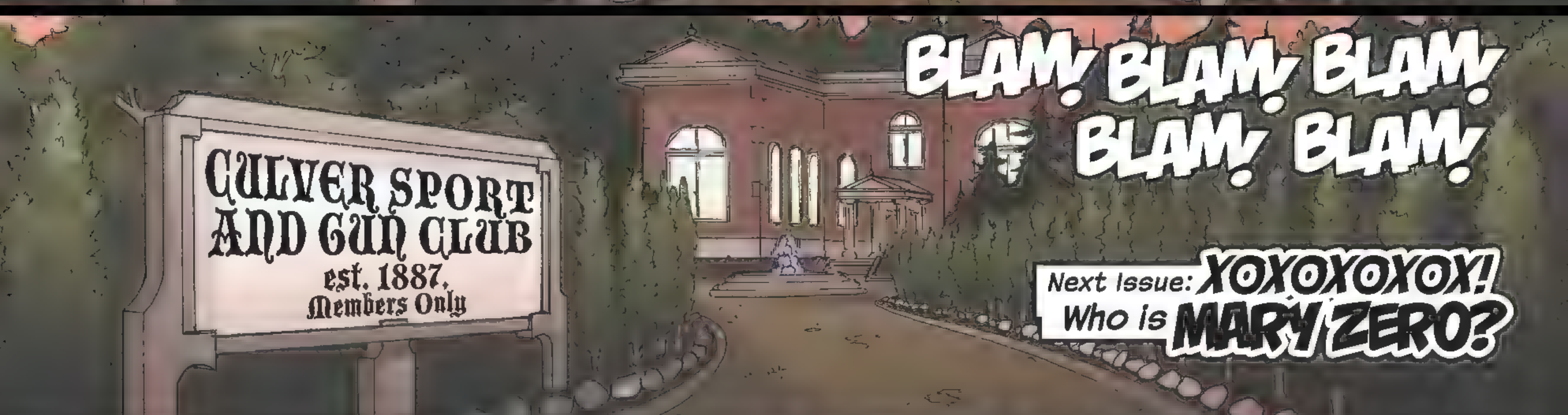
YORE
'CHEE-TIN'
HEART... WILL
MAKE YOU
WEEP...



You think he'll really give them his guns?

YOU'LL
CRY AND
CRY...

AND TRY TO
SLEEP...



BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!
BLAM! BLAM!

Next Issue: **XOXOXOXOX!**
Who is **MARY ZERO?**

MARVEL

3

SIMONE
UDON

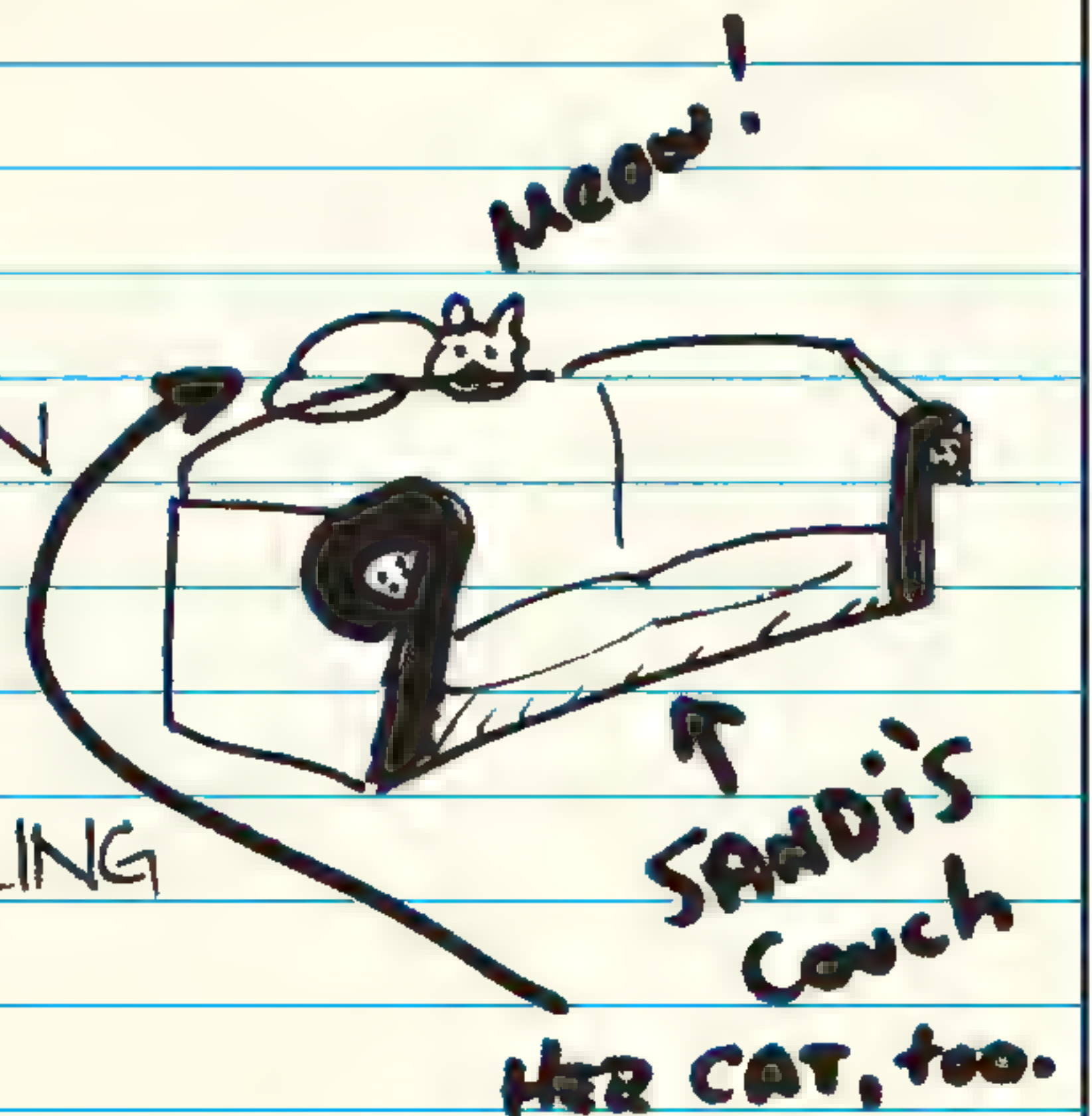
AGENT X



ALEX HAYDEN'S JOURNAL OF ULTIMATE COOLNESS

SO LOSING MY TEMPER.

DAY STARTED SO GOOD, TOO! WAS AT FRIEND SANDI'S PLACE, WHERE I'VE BEEN CRASHING. FIRST MISSION MIXED BAG. IN PLUS COLUMN, GOT OWN THEME PARK, ANGERED CROOKED REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS. NEGATIVES INCLUDE SMELLING LIKE MONKEY. SANDI INSISTS ON MUCH SOAP USAGE.



SHE WANTS TO FIGURE OUT INSIGNIFICANT DETAILS LIKE WHO I AM, WHERE I CAME FROM, WHY I CAN GROW BACK BODY PARTS, ETC. ETC. BORING! ZZZZZZZZZZ!

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE, ANYWAY? DON'T NEED SCRAPBOOK FULL OF VACATION PHOTOS TO SHOOT PEOPLE, WHICH IS ALL I REALLY WANT TO DO. WILL NO ONE LET ME SHOOT PEOPLE? WORLD IS SO UNFAIR.

ANYWAY, SUDDENLY MY TRAINER, THE TASKMASTER, GETS GREAT IDEA. TM SENDS ME ON MISSION, GET THE PUNISHER'S GUNS.



STAND STILL
SO I CAN STAB
YOU! STABBITY
STAB STAB!

(CONFIDENTIAL! TASKMASTER=
INCREDIBLE CREEP WHO LOVES
TO STAB! SHHH!)

GO ON MISSION WITH OTHER NEW FRIEND, OUTLAW. NICER THAN TM, ALSO HAVING EXTREME BAD MUSICAL TASTE. OUTLAW TAKES ME HOME, SHOWS ME HER HOLSTERS. OUTLAW DEFINITELY NICER THAN TM! DEFINITELY!

HUNT PUNISHER. END UP NAKED EXCEPT FOR UNDERWEAR IN PHONE BOOTH DOWNTOWN. MUST ADMIT MISSION NOT A COMPLETE SUCCESS.

BLAME TM.

STUPID, STUPID TM!

THINK I'LL KICK STUPID
TM'S HEAD IN IF I LIVE.

MORE TOMORROW...

LET'S
GO SWIM IN
THE CEE-MENT
POND! DON'T
TOUCH MY HAT,
PARDNER!



I'm a smidge agitated.

This guy was *supposed* to be training me to be a merc. Instead, he's been playing me like a punk, and I've been smiling and saying "Thank you, sir, may I have another?"

"School's out--*forever!*"

As a trainer, though, he *did* teach me one thing--

--whoever said problems couldn't be solved by violence just wasn't *trying* hard enough.

I'D LIKE TO REGISTER A COMPLAINT ON YOUR DAMN SPLEEN!



DEAD MAN'S SWITCH PART 3

QUIET DESPERATION

Story by
Gail Simone

Art by UDON with Dave Ahn, Rob Ross, Omar Dogan,
Calvin Lo, Arnold Tsang, & Andrew Hou

UDON Chief
Erik Ko

Letters by
Cory Petit

Assisted by
Lynne Yoshii

Edited by
Andrew Lis

Chief
Joe Quesada

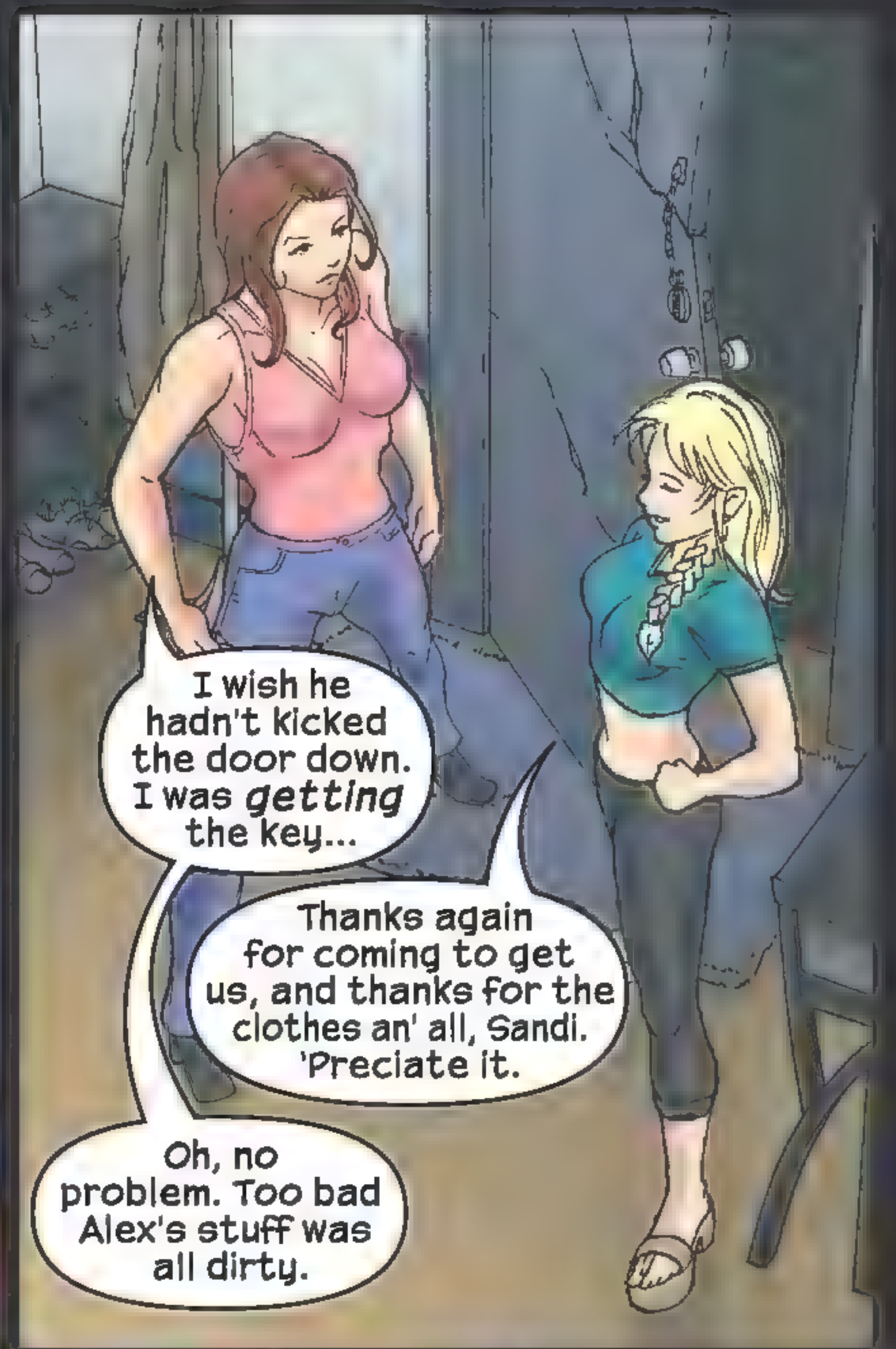
President
Bill Jemas



You set me up.

You sent me out against the Punisher.

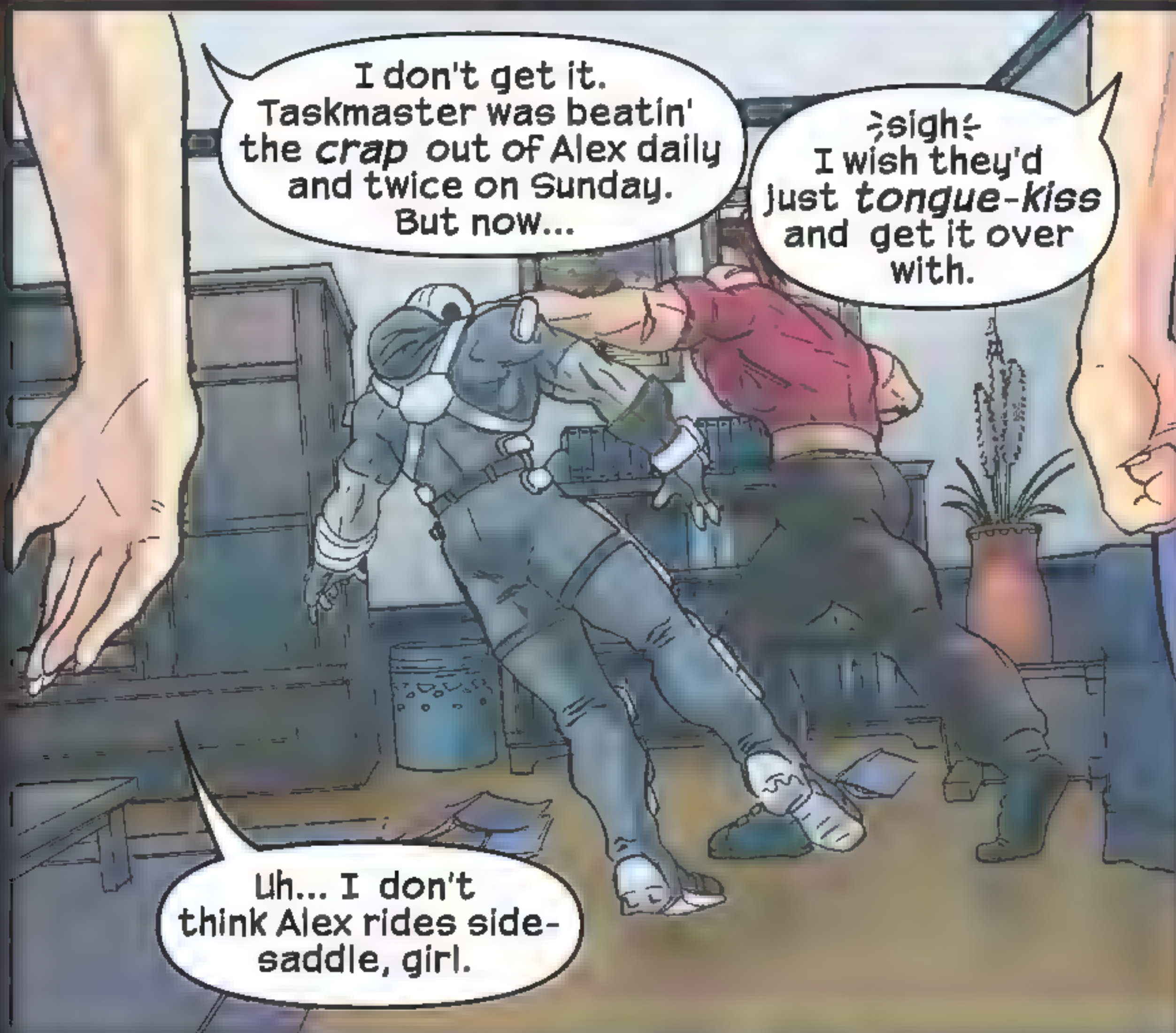
UNNNNNFFFF



I wish he hadn't kicked the door down. I was *getting* the key...

Thanks again for coming to get us, and thanks for the clothes an' all, Sandi. 'Preciate it.

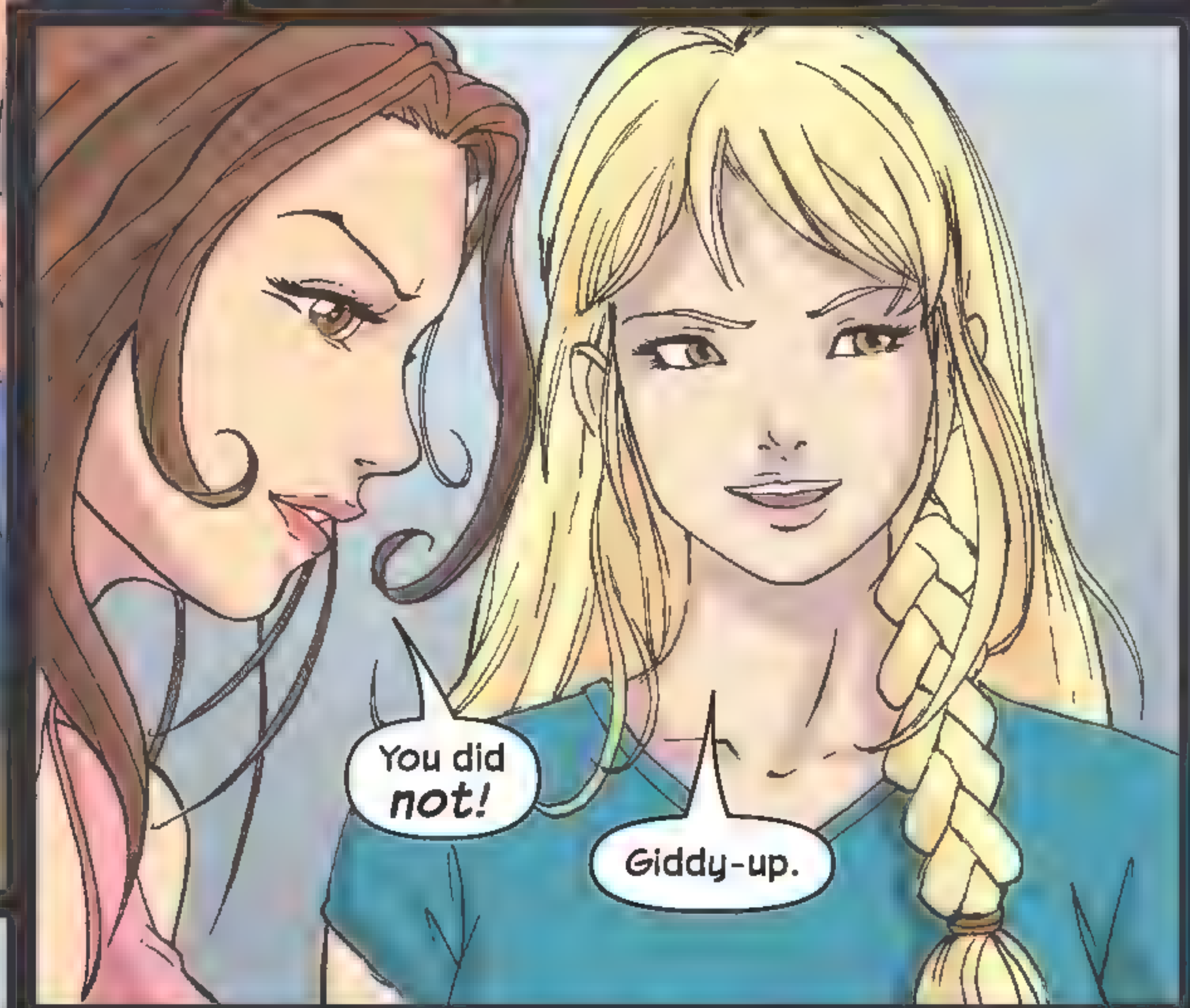
Oh, no problem. Too bad Alex's stuff was all dirty.



I don't get it. Taskmaster was beatin' the *crap* out of Alex daily and twice on Sunday. But now...

~sigh~ I wish they'd just *tongue-kiss* and get it over with.

Uh... I don't think Alex rides side-saddle, girl.



You did *not*!

Giddy-up.



Don't you try that tired Captain America shinola on me.

Just. don't.



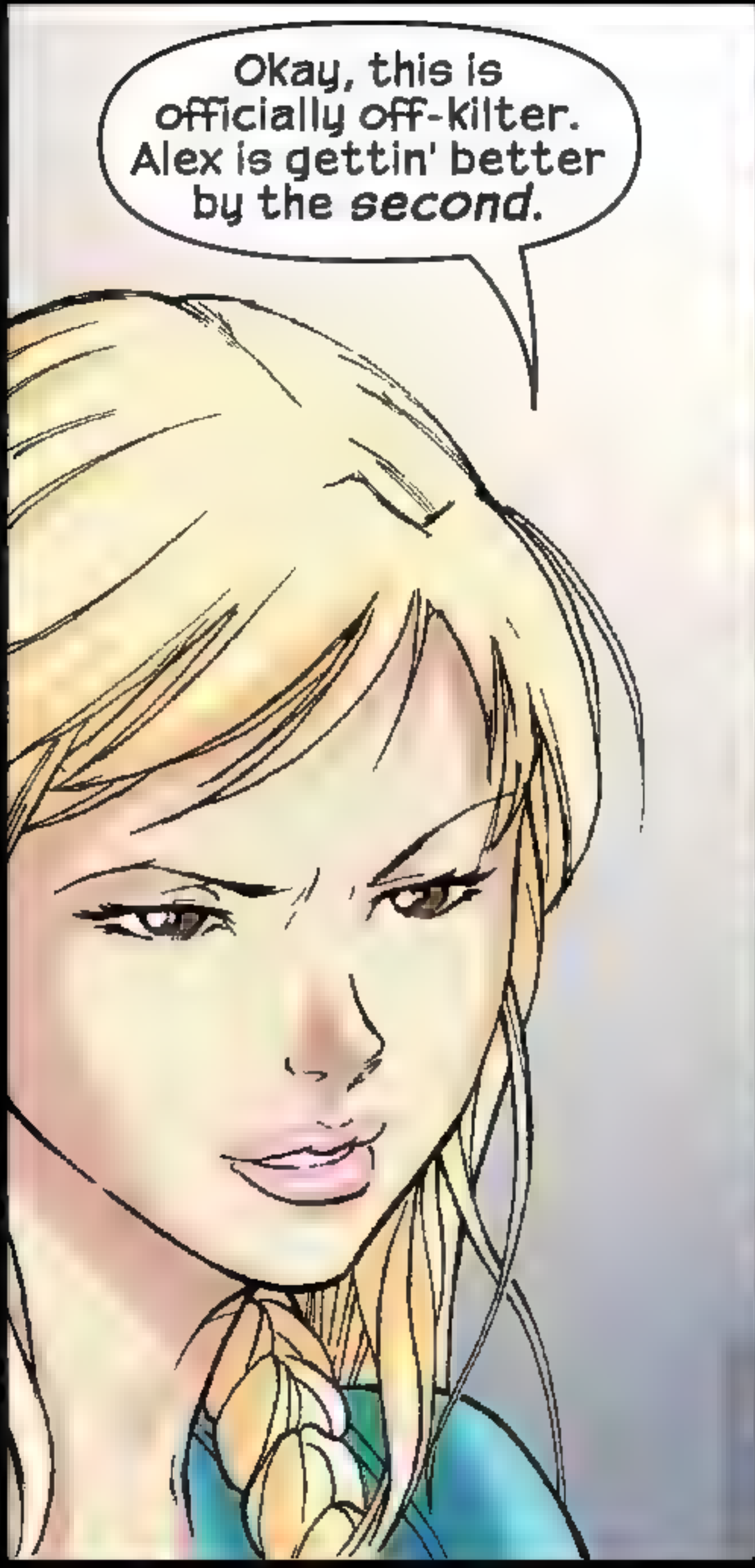
~huuh... huuh...~

THWIP!

So now you're Spider-Man, is that it?

Snore.

How does it feel to have *nothing* that really belongs to you?



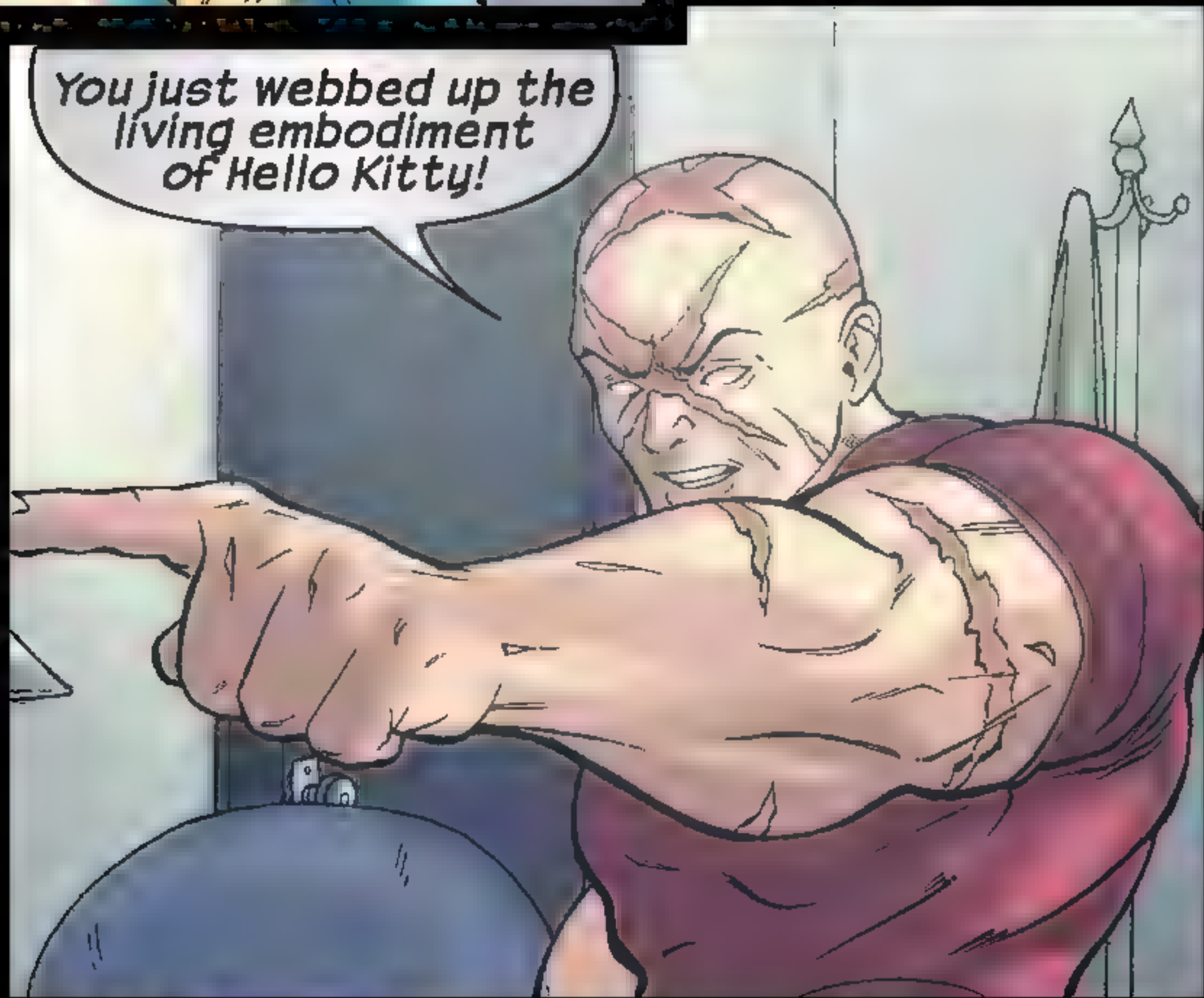
Okay, this is officially off-kilter. Alex is gettin' better by the *second*.



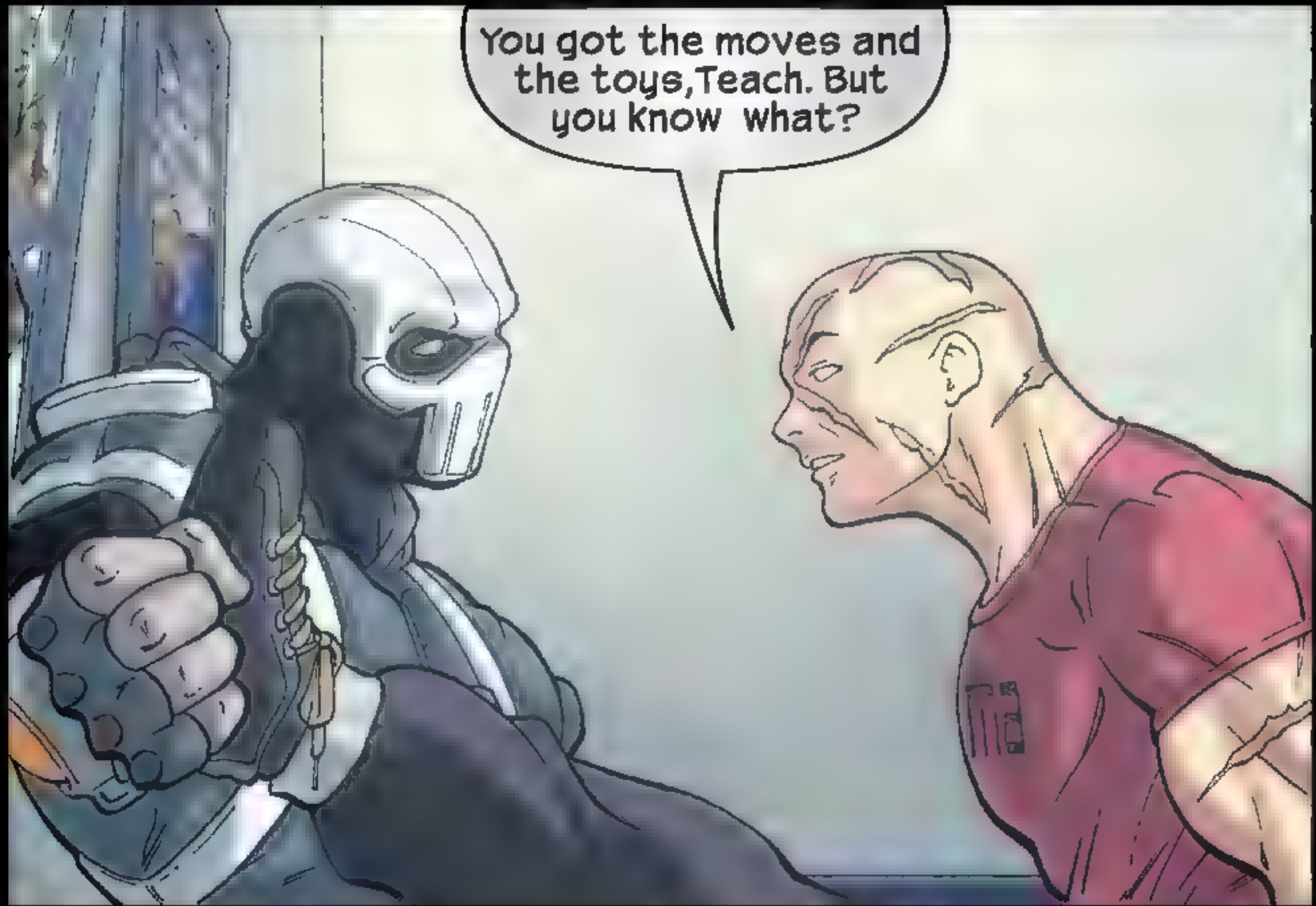
You got off beating the snot out of me, but the foot's on the other hand now, isn't it? I mean, the gloves are...uh...on the other shoe...

...Wait...
...Did you just...?

MERRRROOOWWWK!



You just webbed up the living embodiment of Hello Kitty!

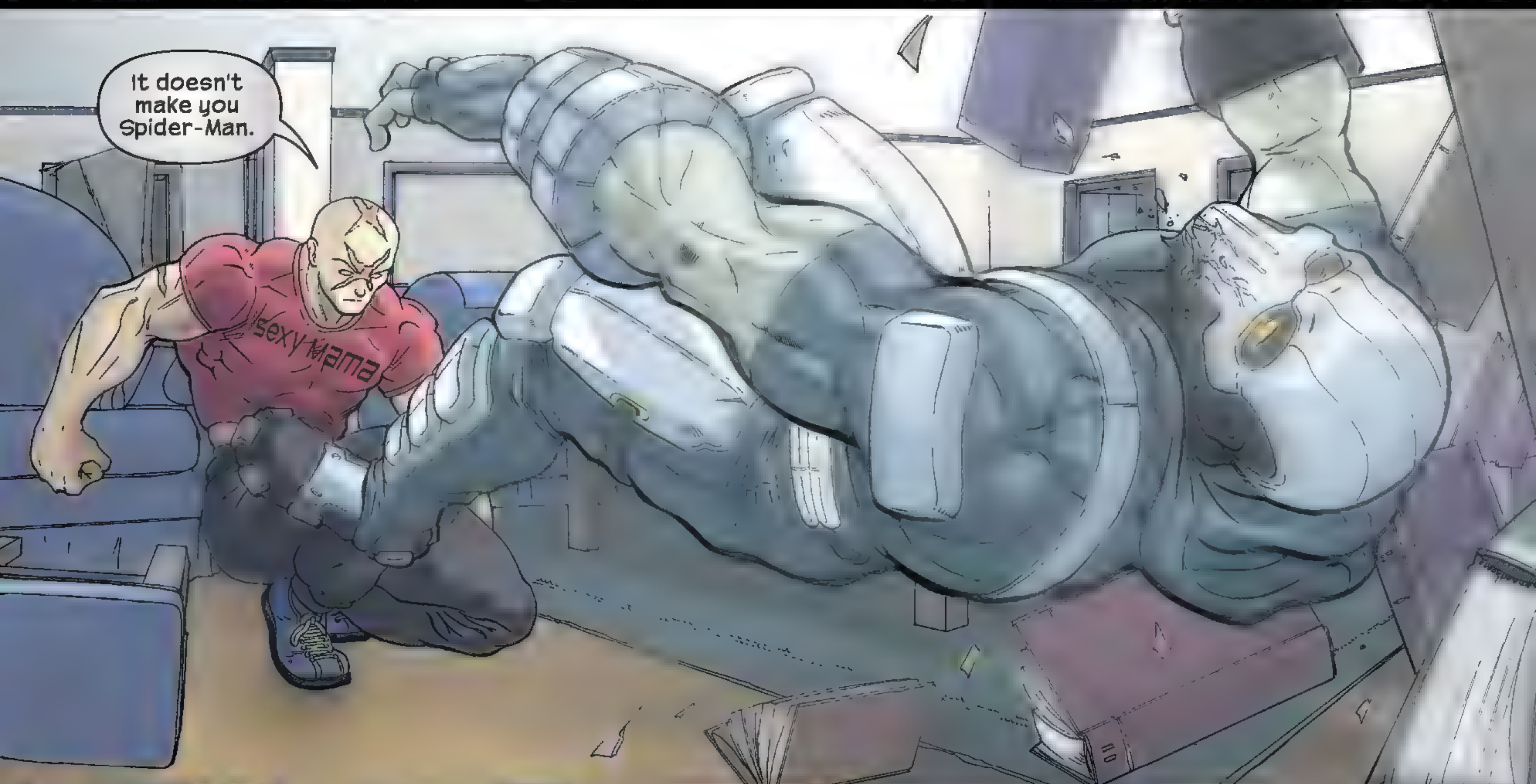


You got the moves and the toys, Teach. But you know what?



That is it!

SEXY AXES



It doesn't make you Spider-Man.

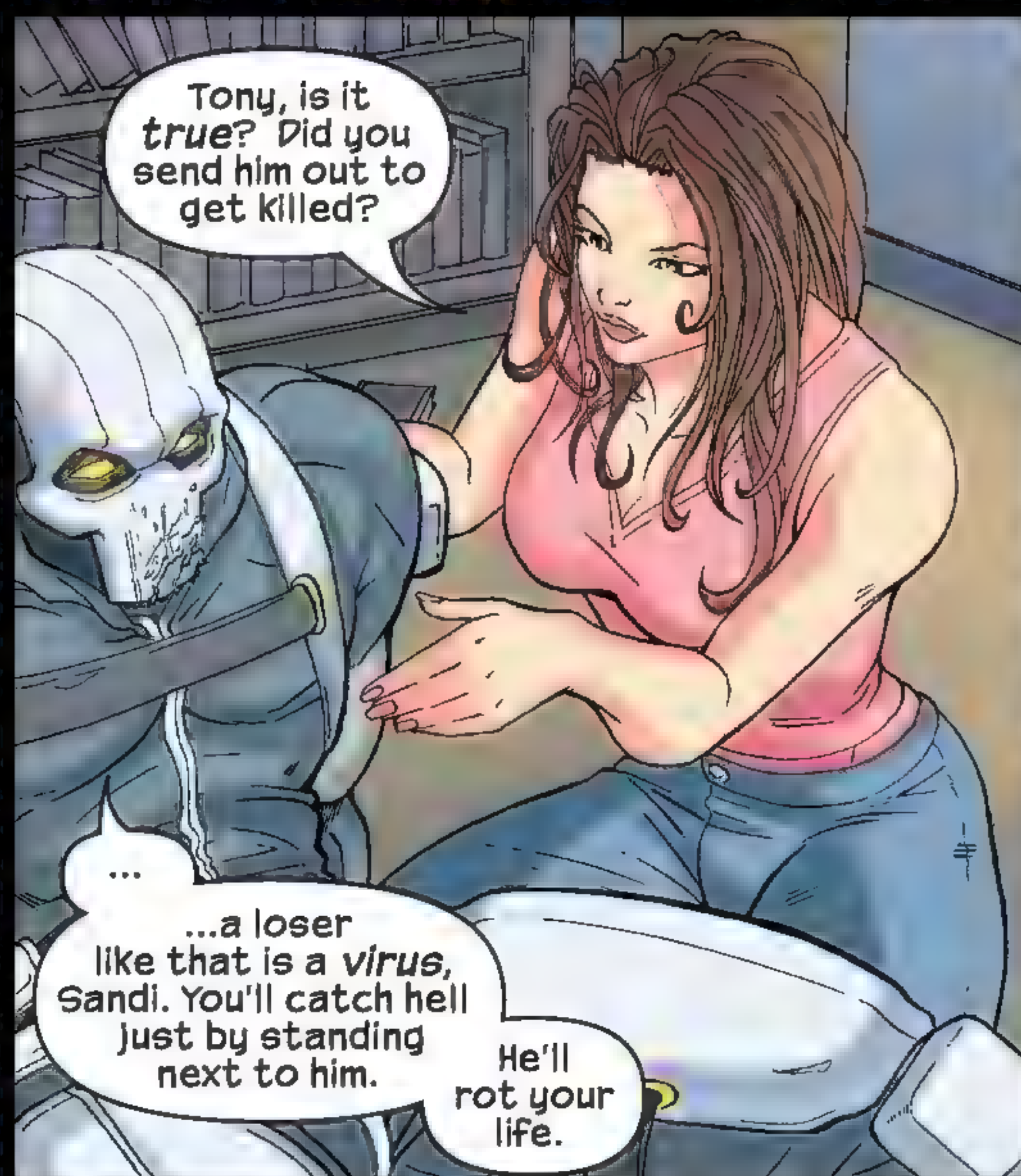


....unh...
uhn...

hukk



Stop it,
Alex! You made
your point.



Tony, is it
true? Did you
send him out to
get killed?

...
...a loser
like that is a *virus*,
Sandi. You'll catch hell
just by standing
next to him.

He'll
rot your
life.

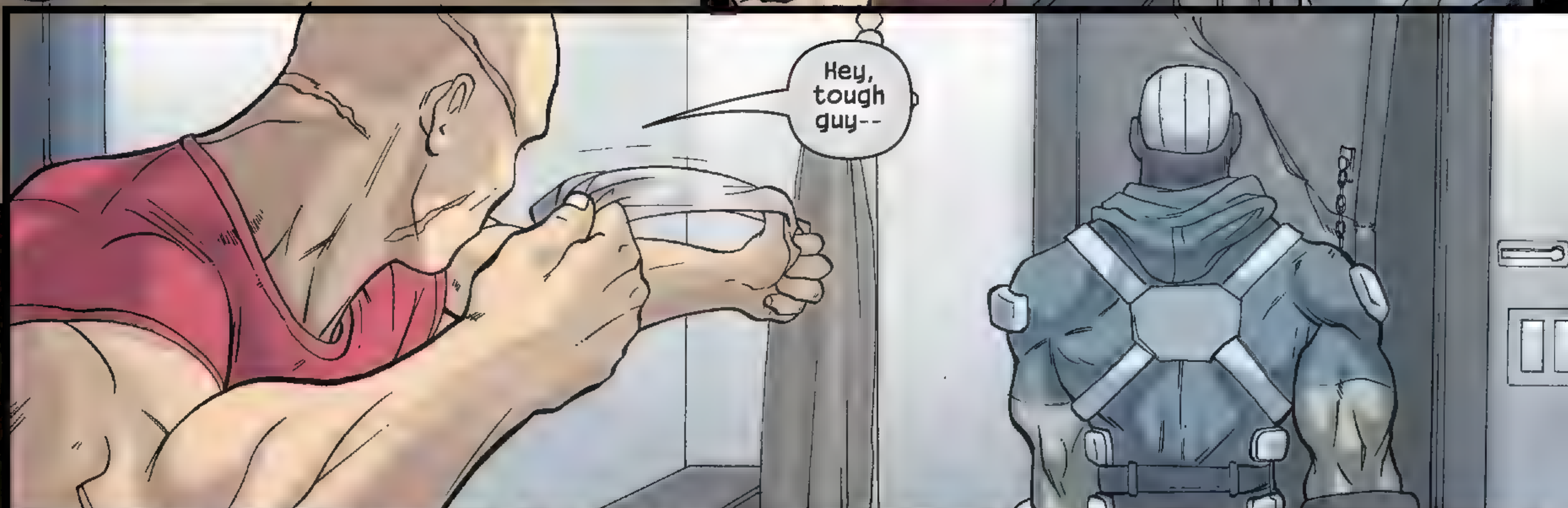
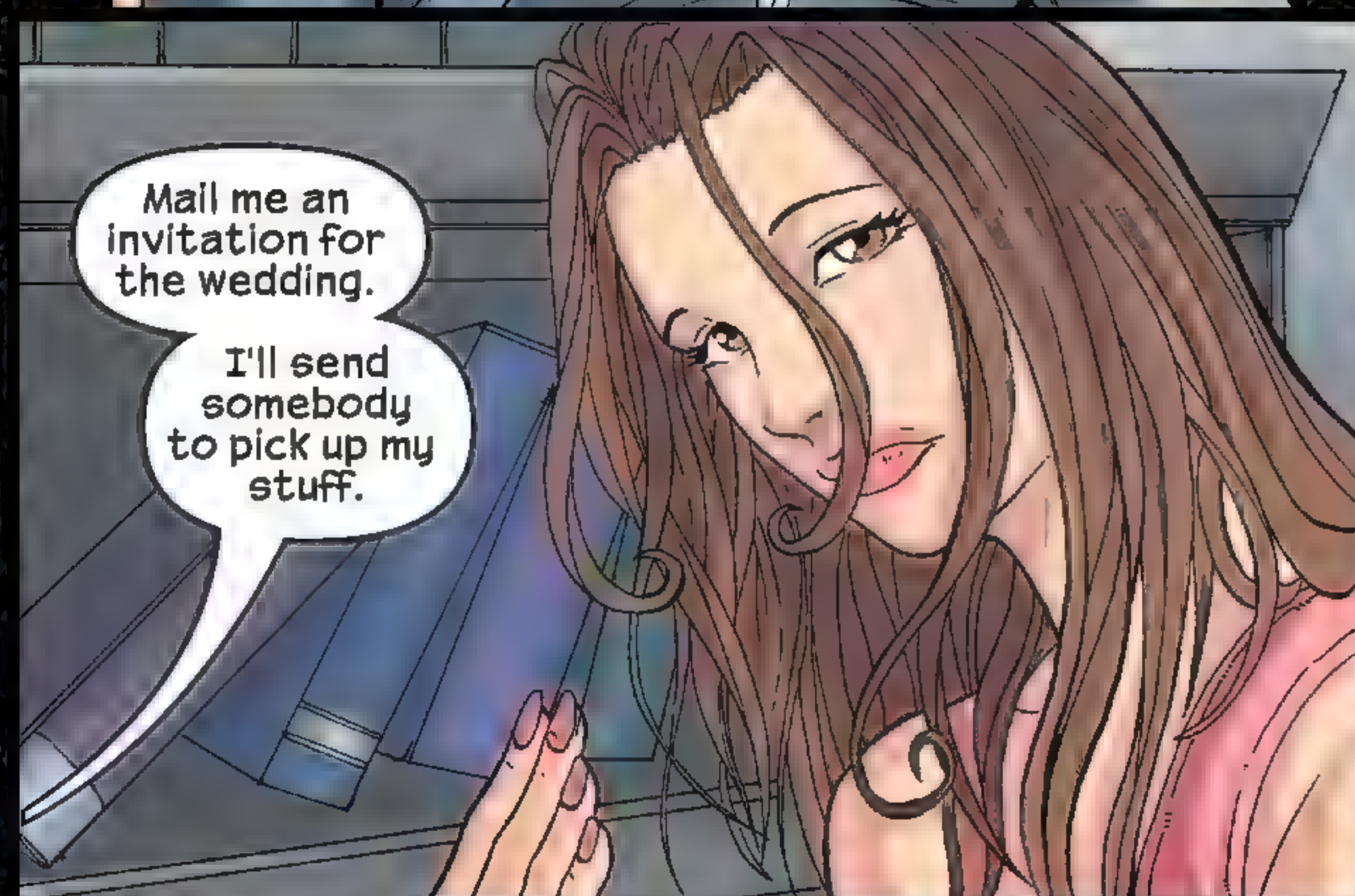
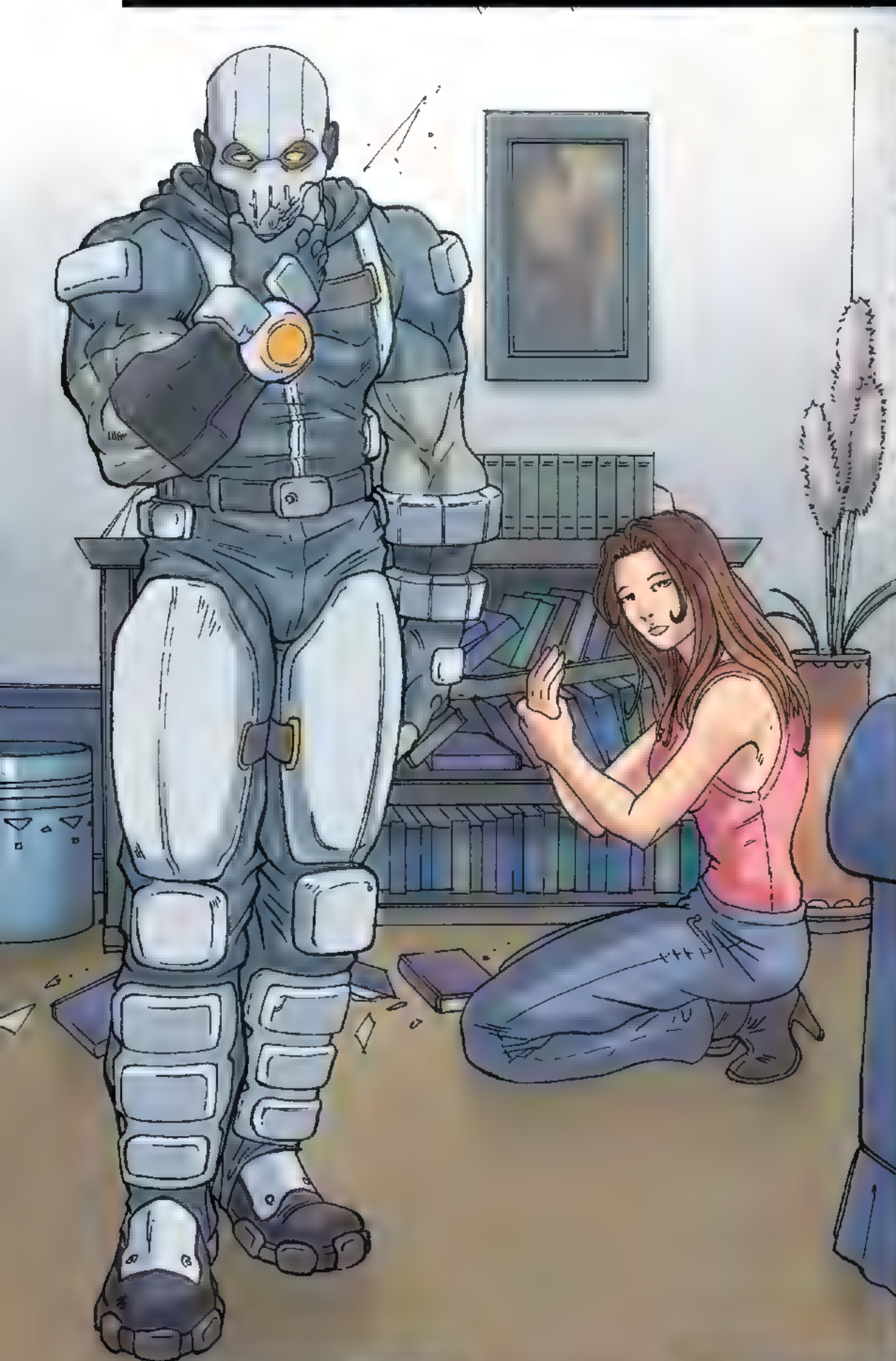
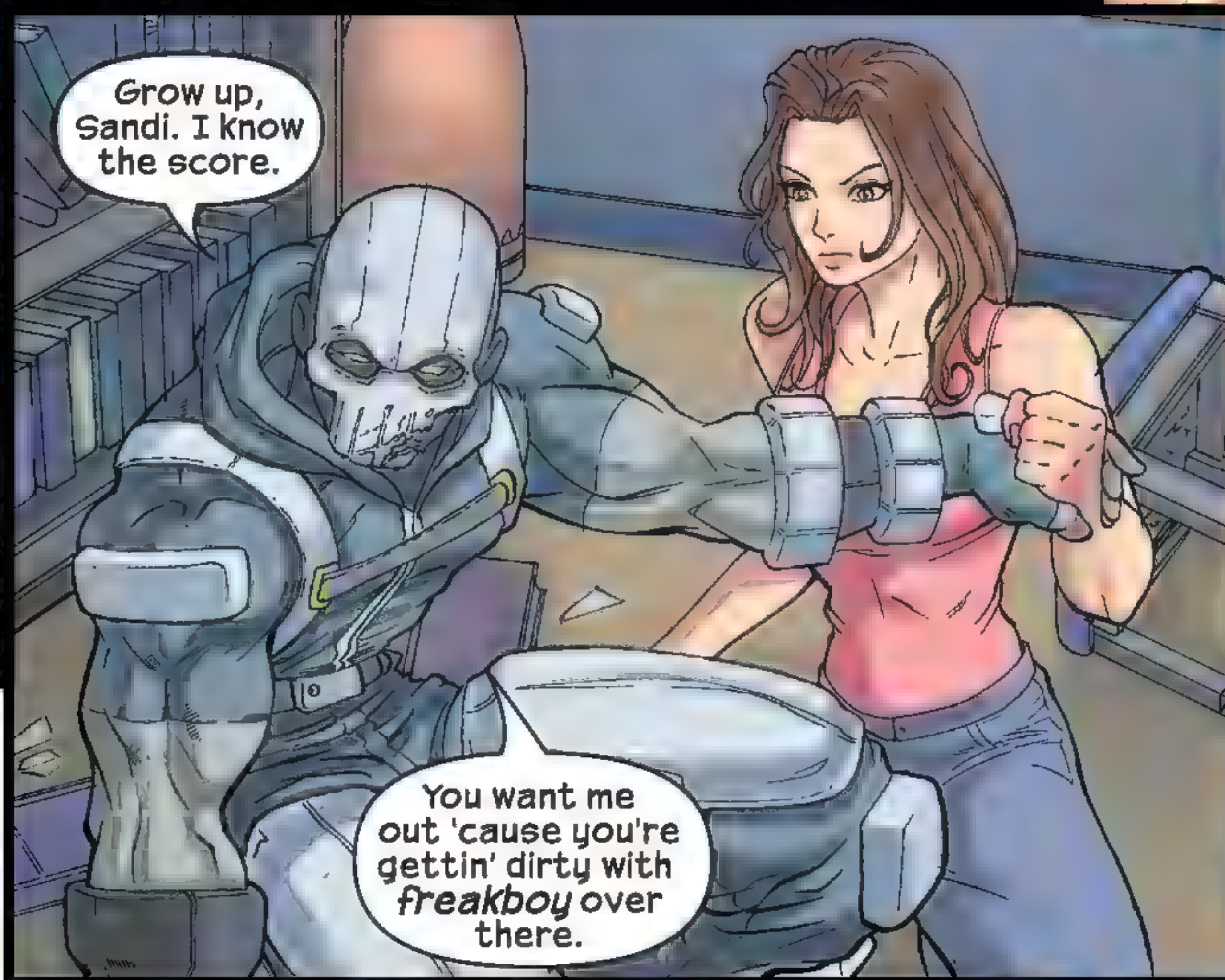


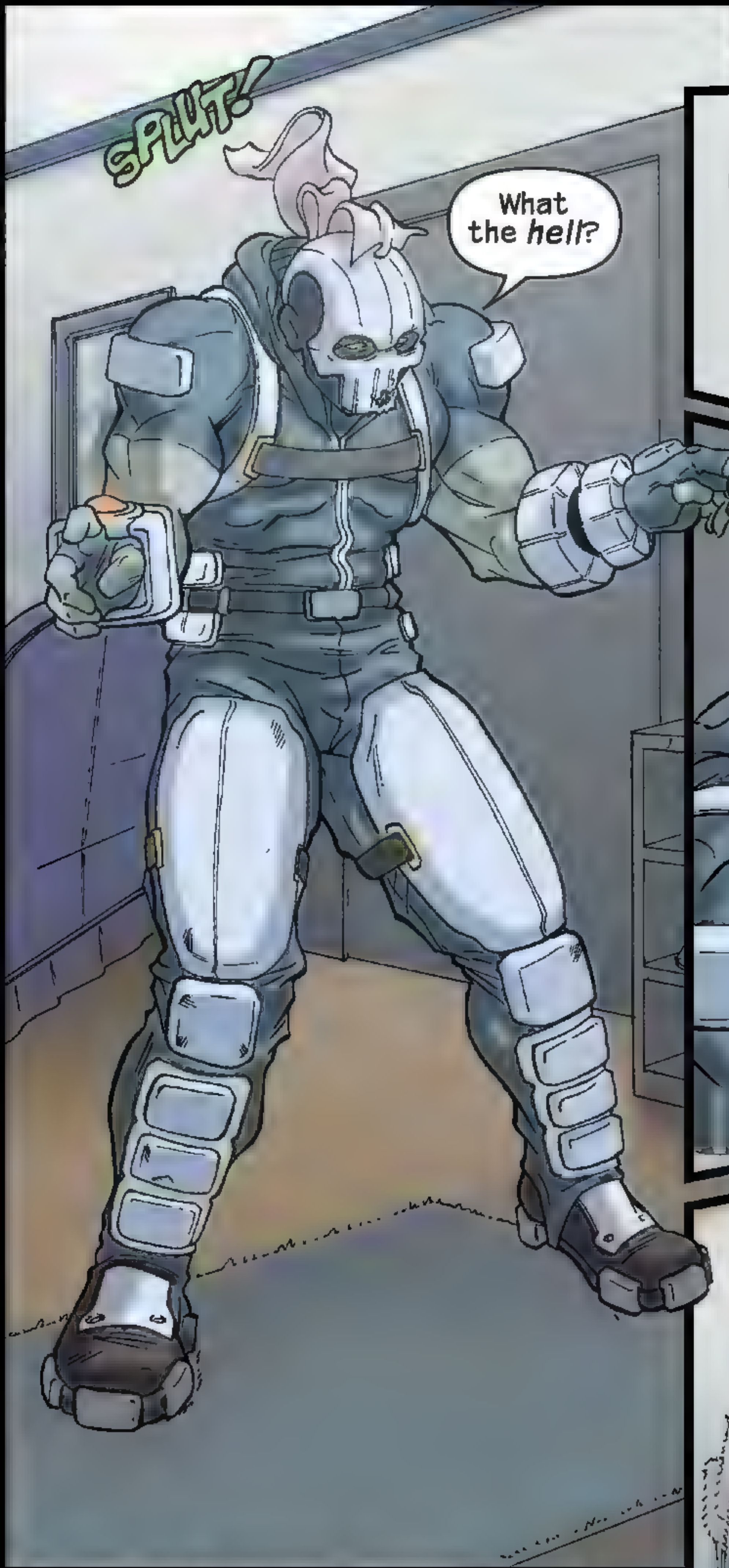
Tony.

I know you
blame yourself for
me getting hurt last time,
but I've healed.
I'm okay.



You don't
need to protect
me anymore.





What the hell?



That's my jock.

I wasn't sure if you *knew* they came in more sizes than just 'Extra Teensy.'



You know, you got just the kind of head looks *great* in crosshairs.

Be seeing you.



Alex, how'd you do that? How'd you beat him like that?

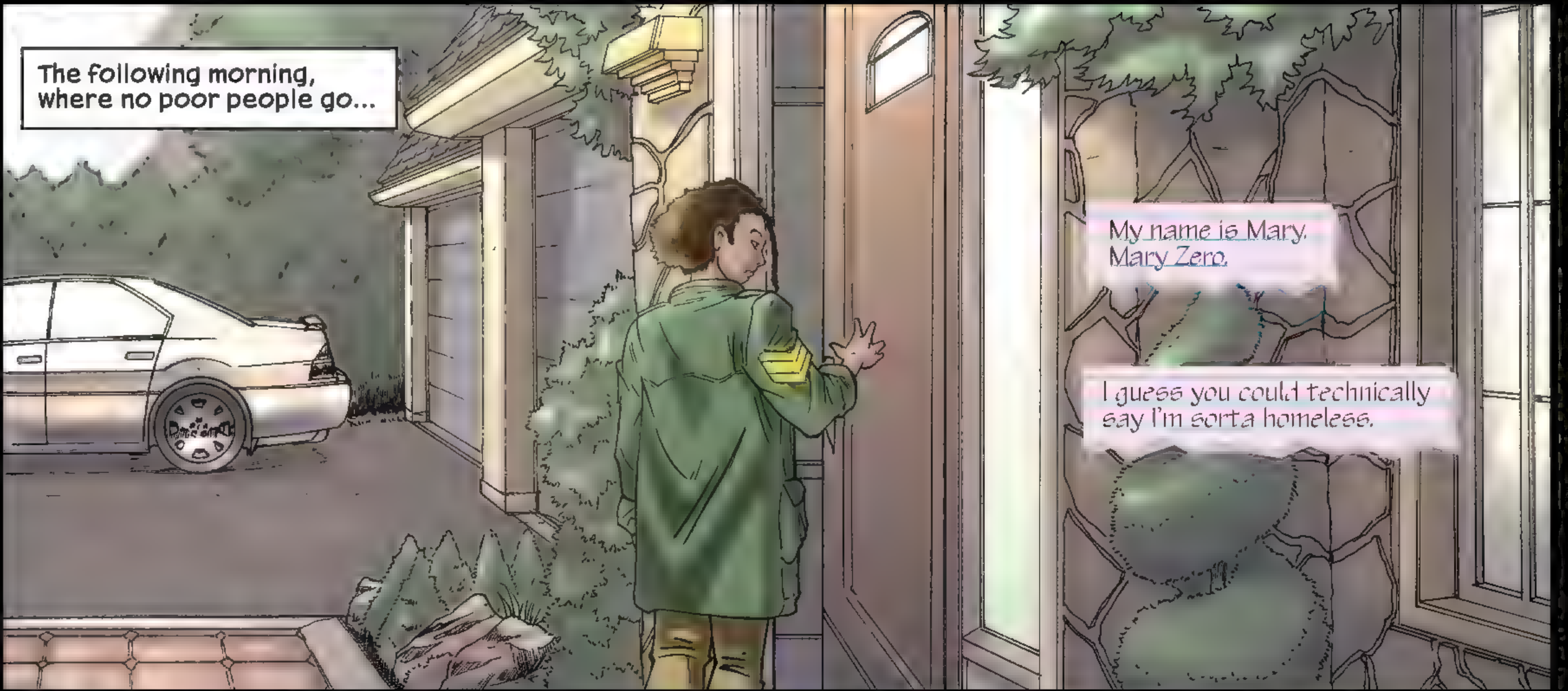
I have no idea. But it was refreshing.

Sexy Mama

SLAM!



BOOM!



The following morning,
where no poor people go...

My name is Mary.
Mary Zero.

I guess you could technically
say I'm sort a homeless.



Hi, 'Mom!' Hi,
'Dad!' Some of that
bacon for me?

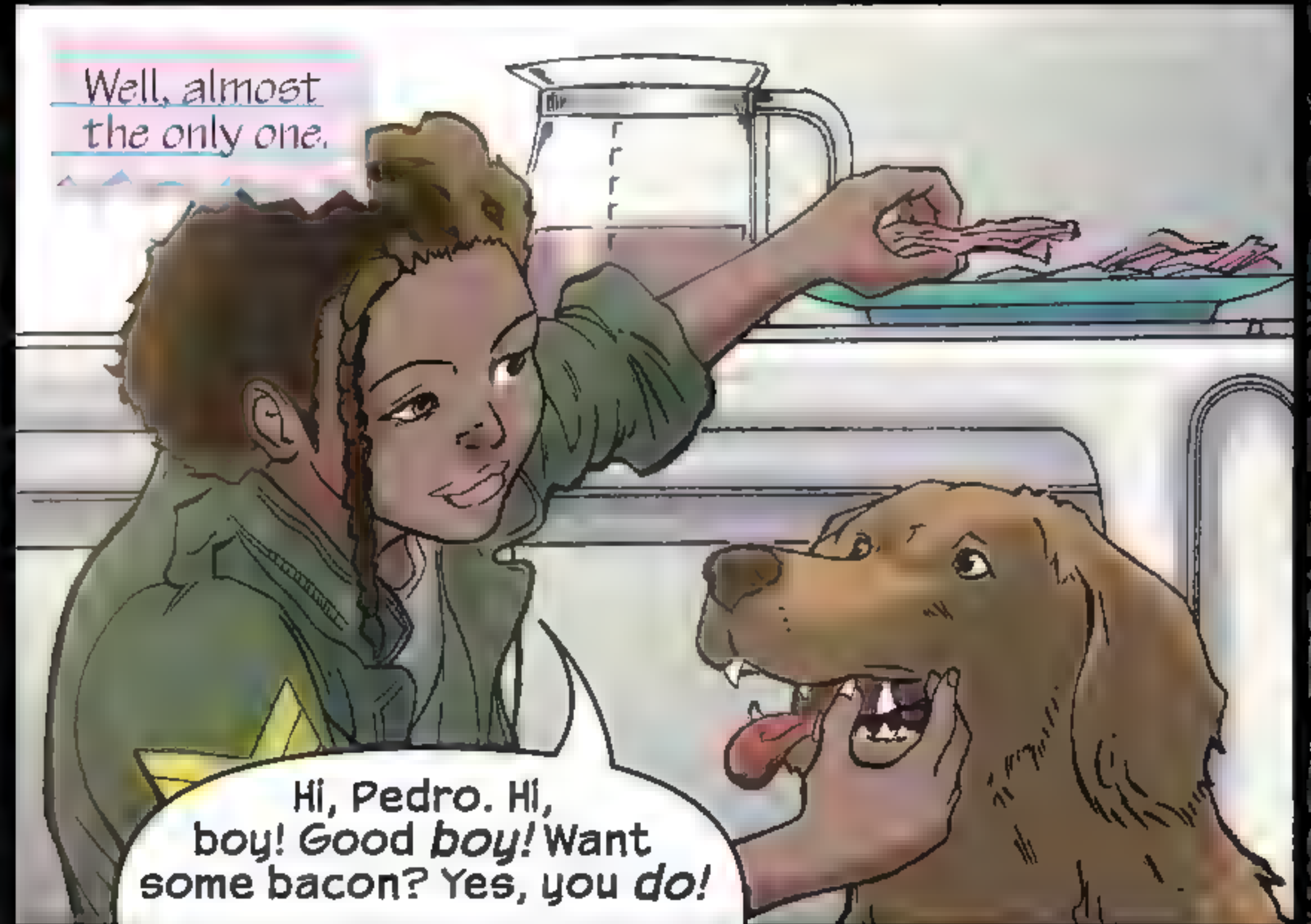
...So I say to him,
right to his face, "Then,
maybe this is more yacht
than you can *handle*!"

Oh, Steve, tell
me you didn't say
that...! Haha!

You
betcha
I did!

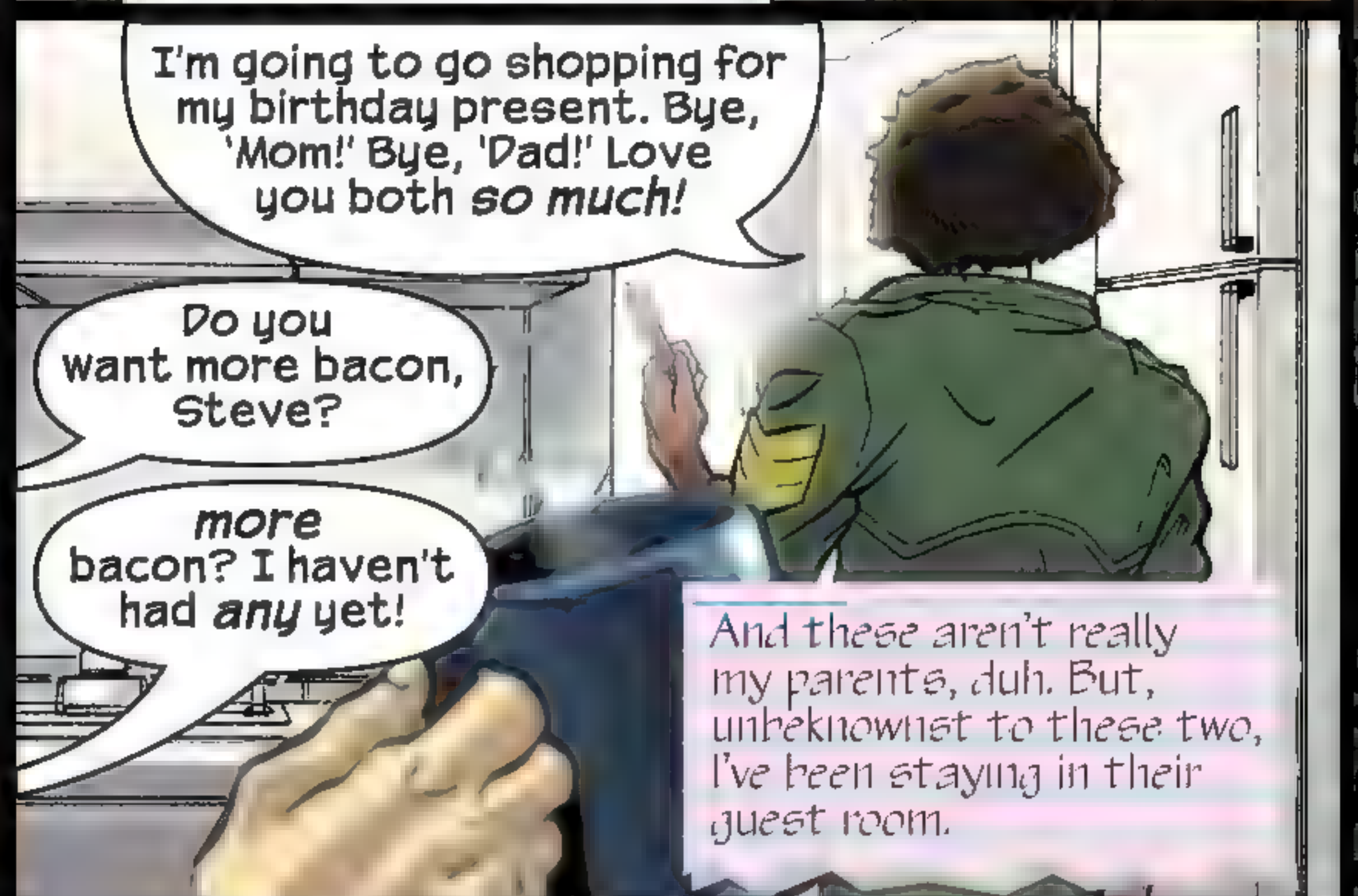
I have this weird
thing about me.

I'm alive, I'm visible, but I'm
the only one who knows it.
Happy Birthday, right?



Well, almost
the only one.

Hi, Pedro. Hi,
boy! Good boy! Want
some bacon? Yes, you *do*!

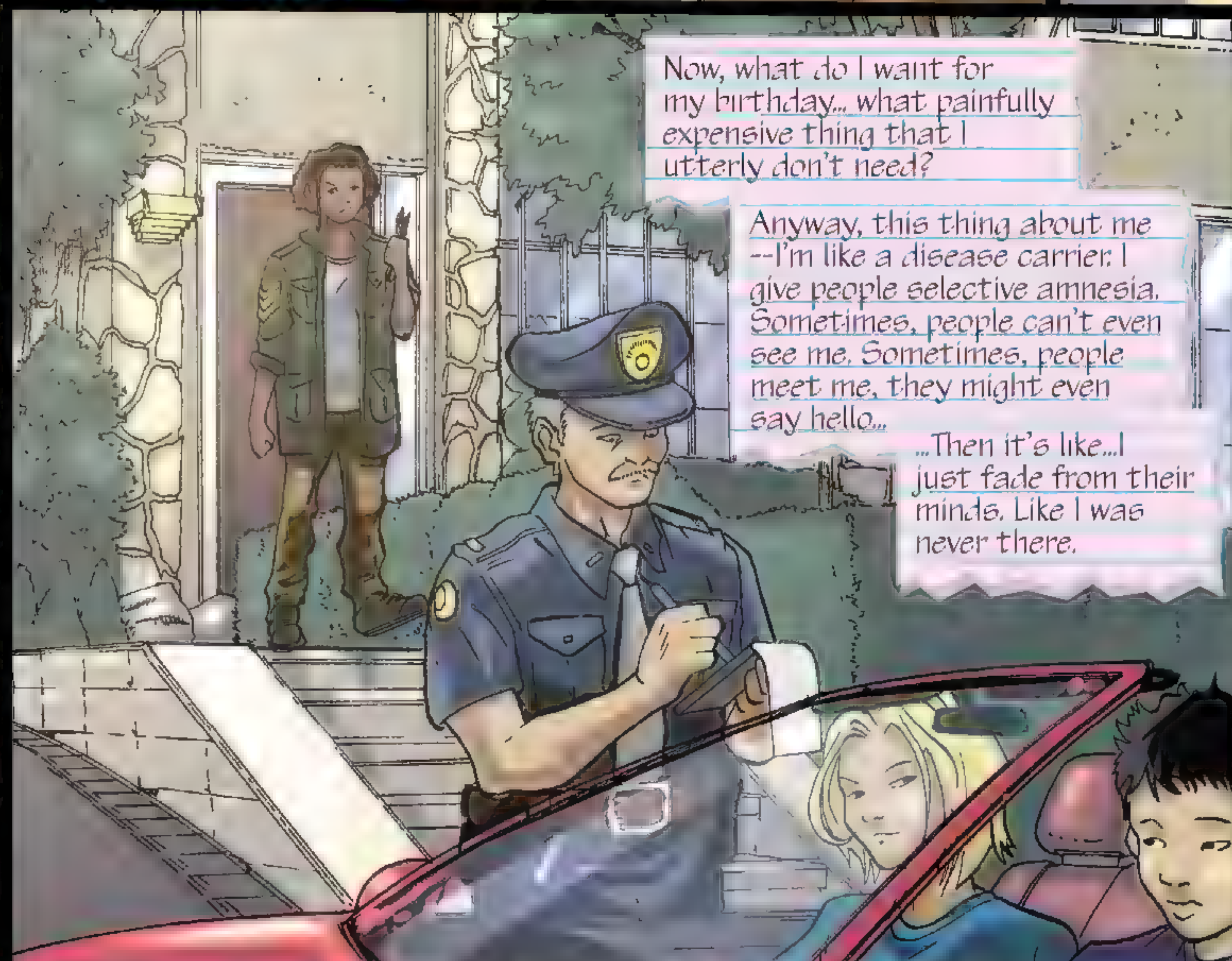


I'm going to go shopping for
my birthday present. Bye,
'Mom!' Bye, 'Dad!' Love
you both *so much*!

Do you
want more bacon,
Steve?

more
bacon? I haven't
had *any* yet!

And these aren't really
my parents, duh. But,
unbeknownst to these two,
I've been staying in their
guest room.



Now, what do I want for
my birthday... what painfully
expensive thing that I
utterly don't need?

Anyway, this thing about me
--I'm like a disease carrier. I
give people selective amnesia.
Sometimes, people can't even
see me. Sometimes, people
meet me, they might even
say hello...

...Then it's like...I
just fade from their
minds. Like I was
never there.



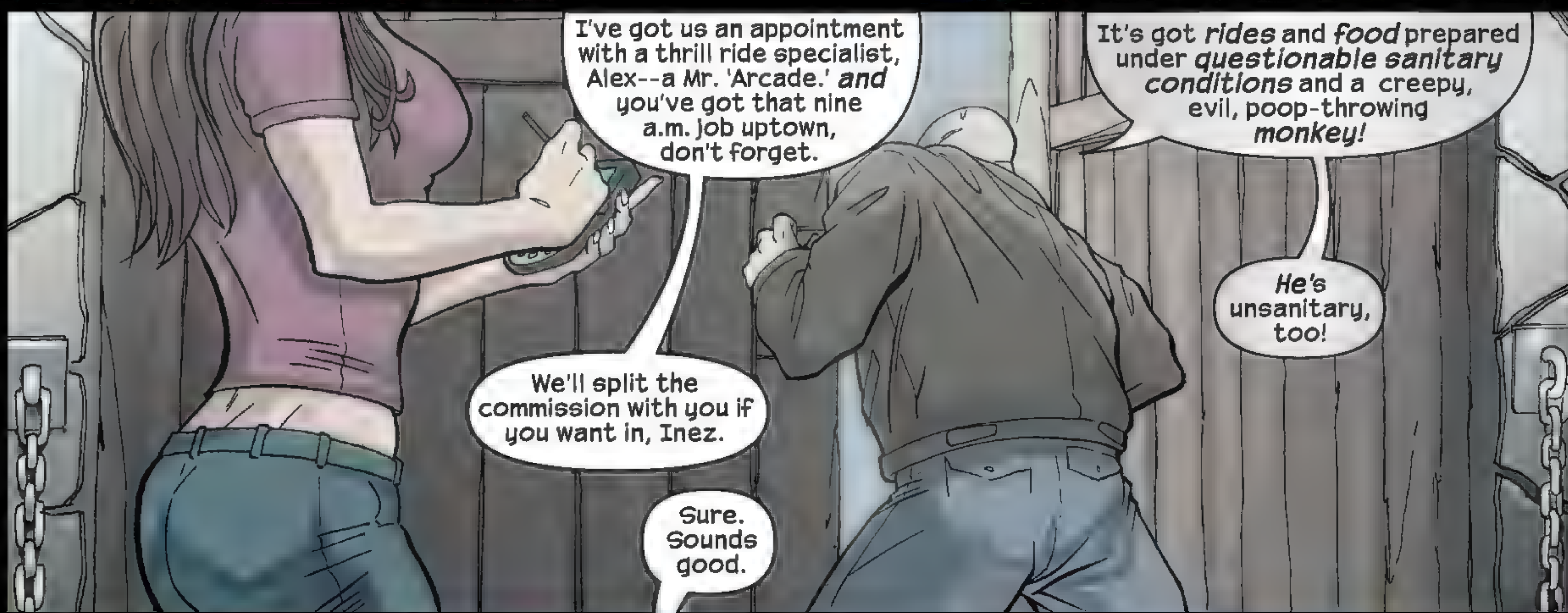
That's a cool gun,
mister. Mind if I
borrow it?

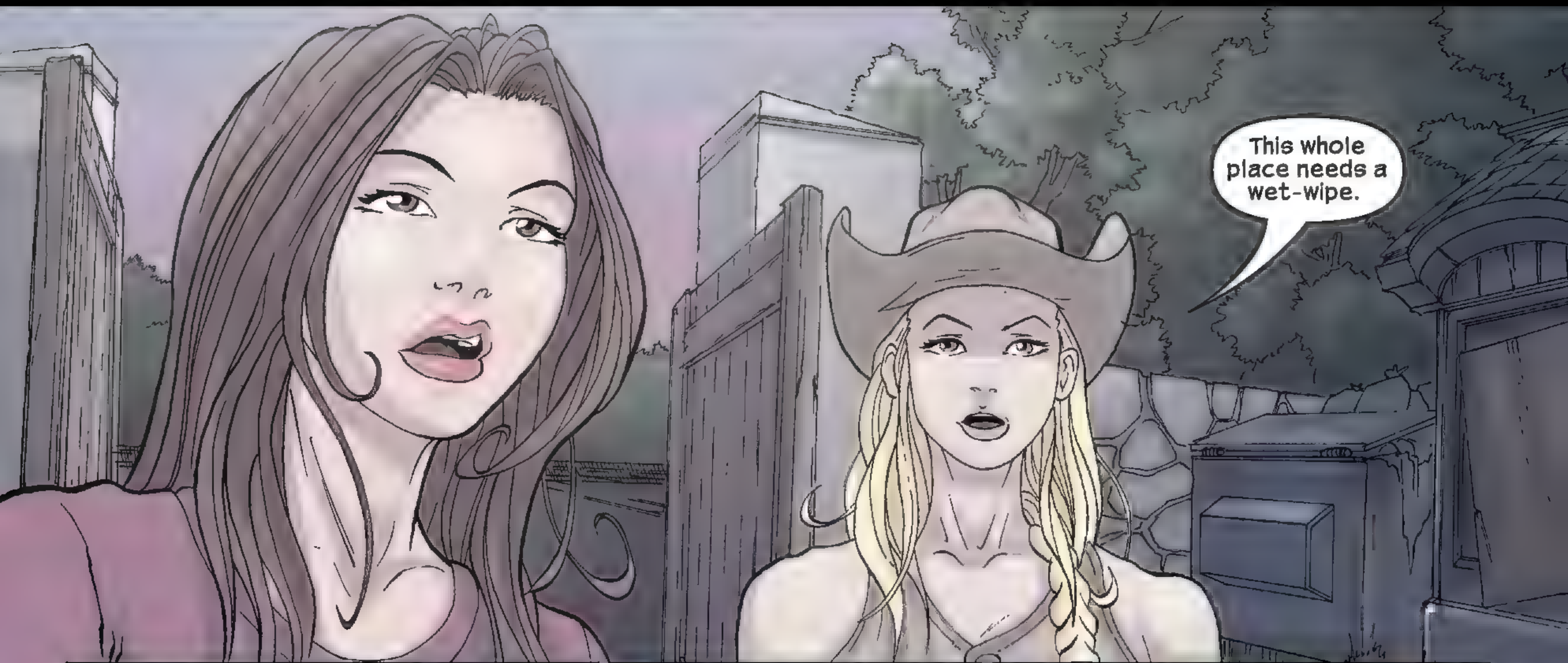
"No? Go
right ahead?"
Well, it *is* my
birthday...

mmm...still
hungry...

But I had a
real family once.
I really did.







This whole place needs a wet-wipe.

No, no. Look at all this great stuff!

We can have cotton candy for breakfast! And there's this great cleanser if you vomit!

This place has been shut down for weeks...don't eat that stuff!

This food is great! It's completely disgusting!

Hey, Inez! You like horses, right? How about a spin? Just like Texas, right? Yeeha! Redneck heaven!

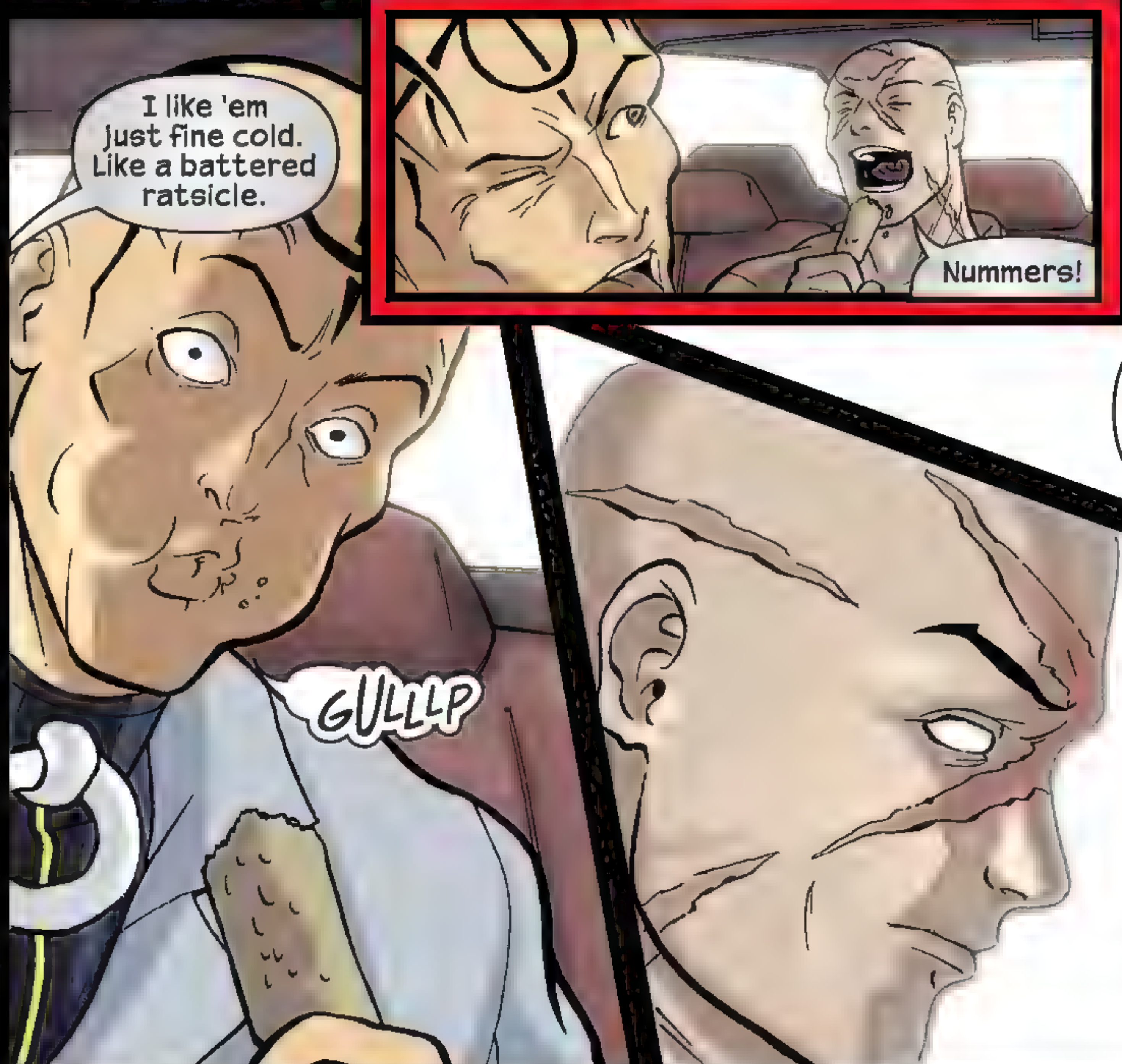
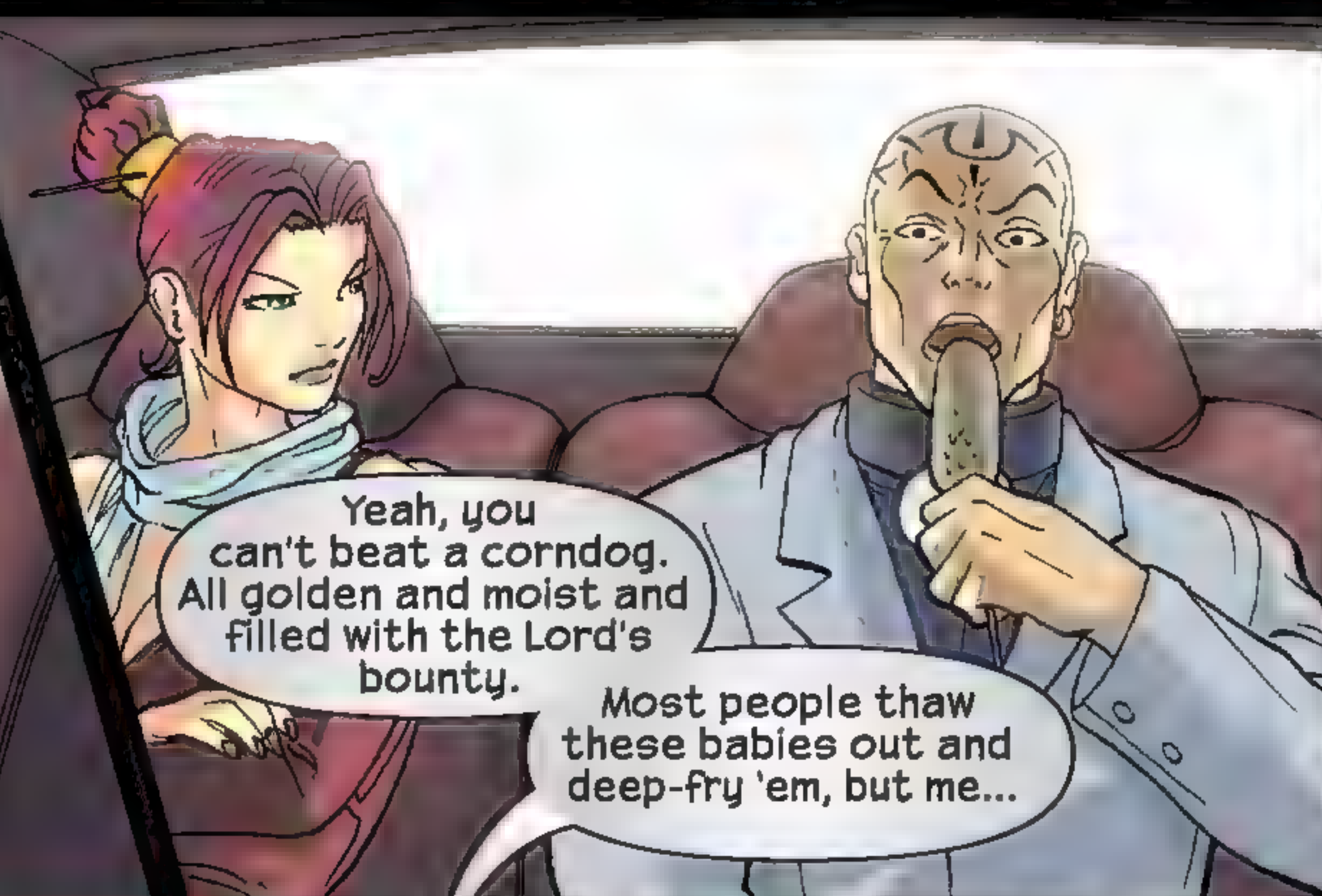
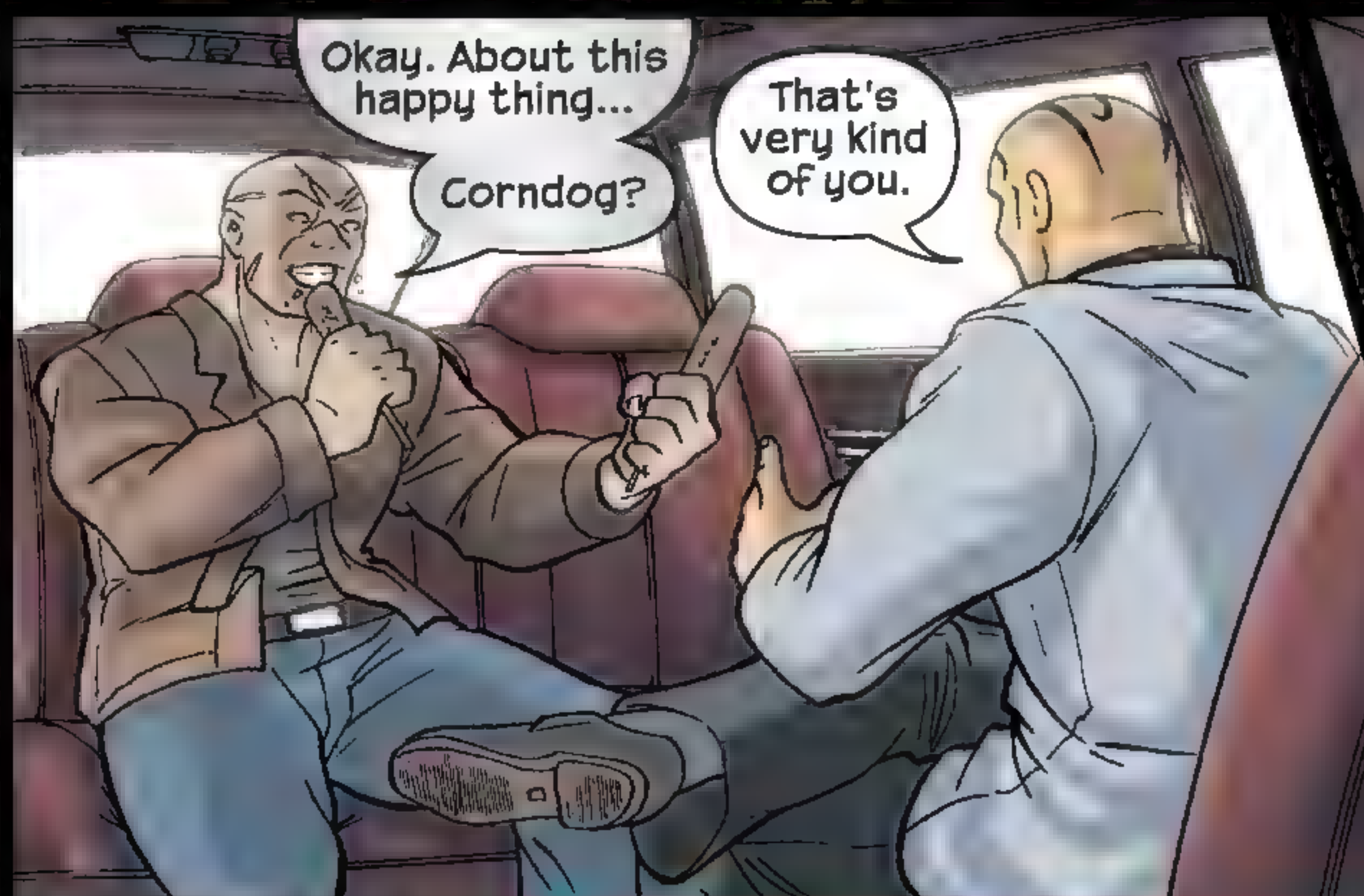
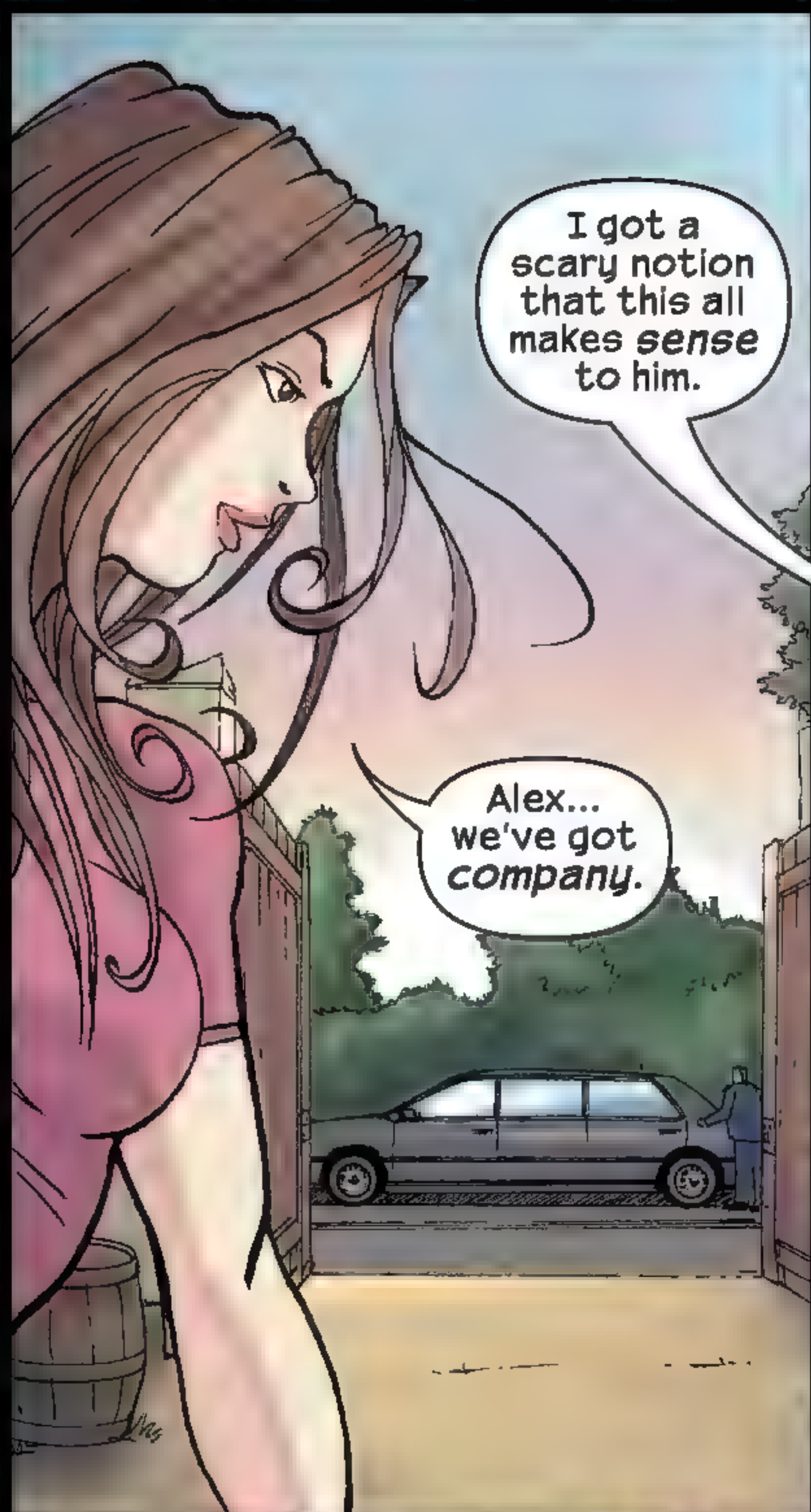
Let's ride the coaster... We can see if the brakes still work!

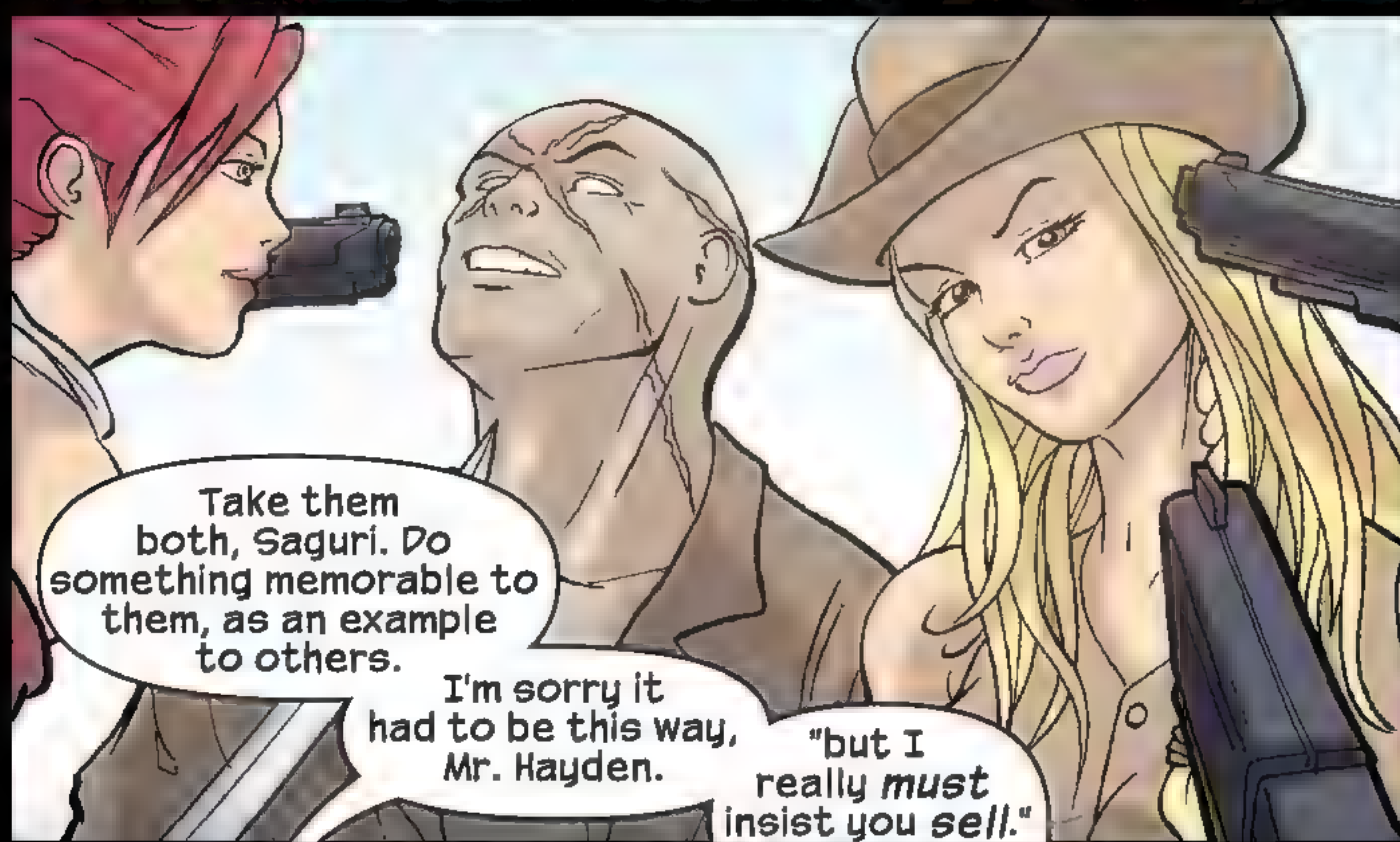


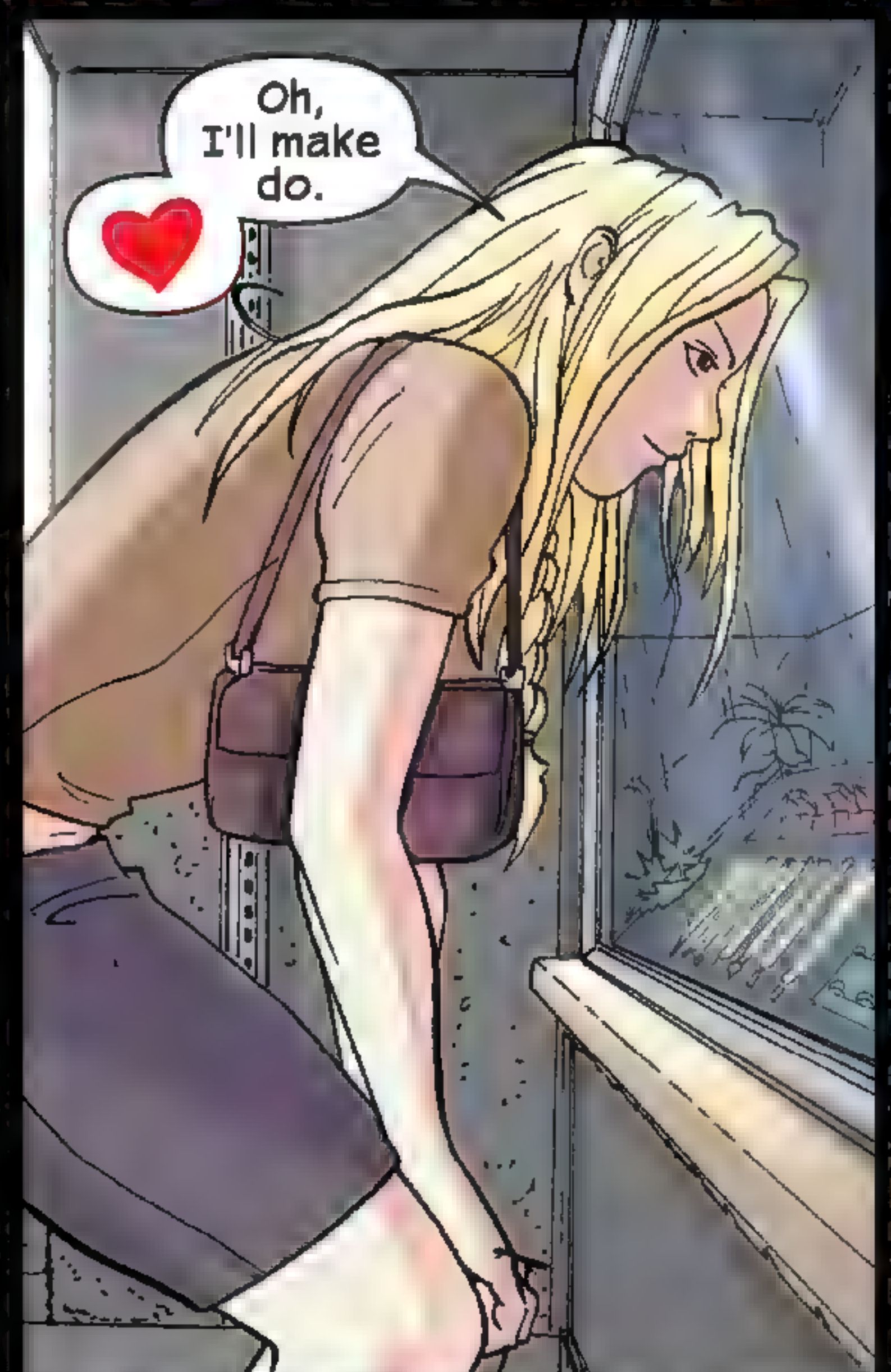
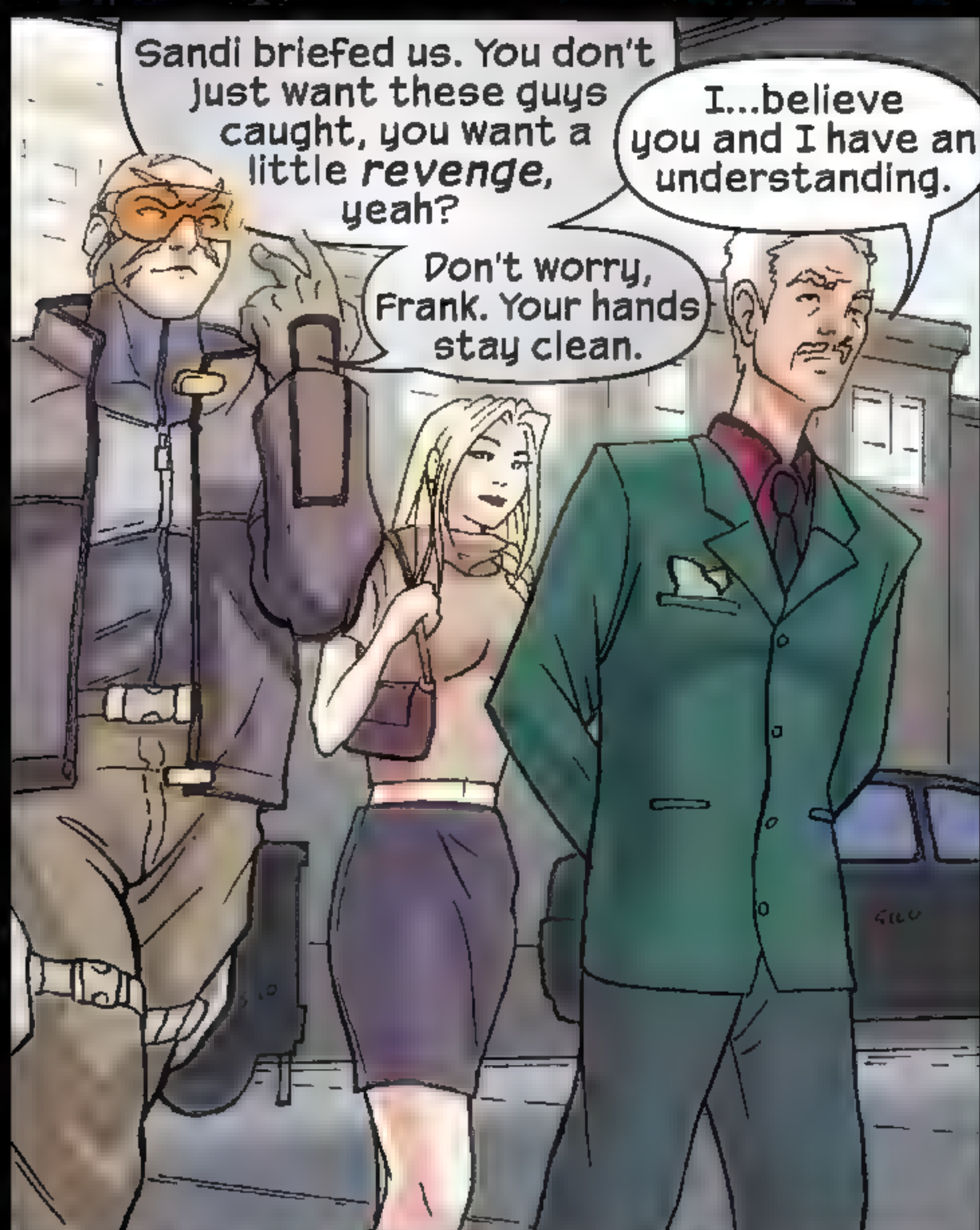
My question is: Do guys ever grow up?

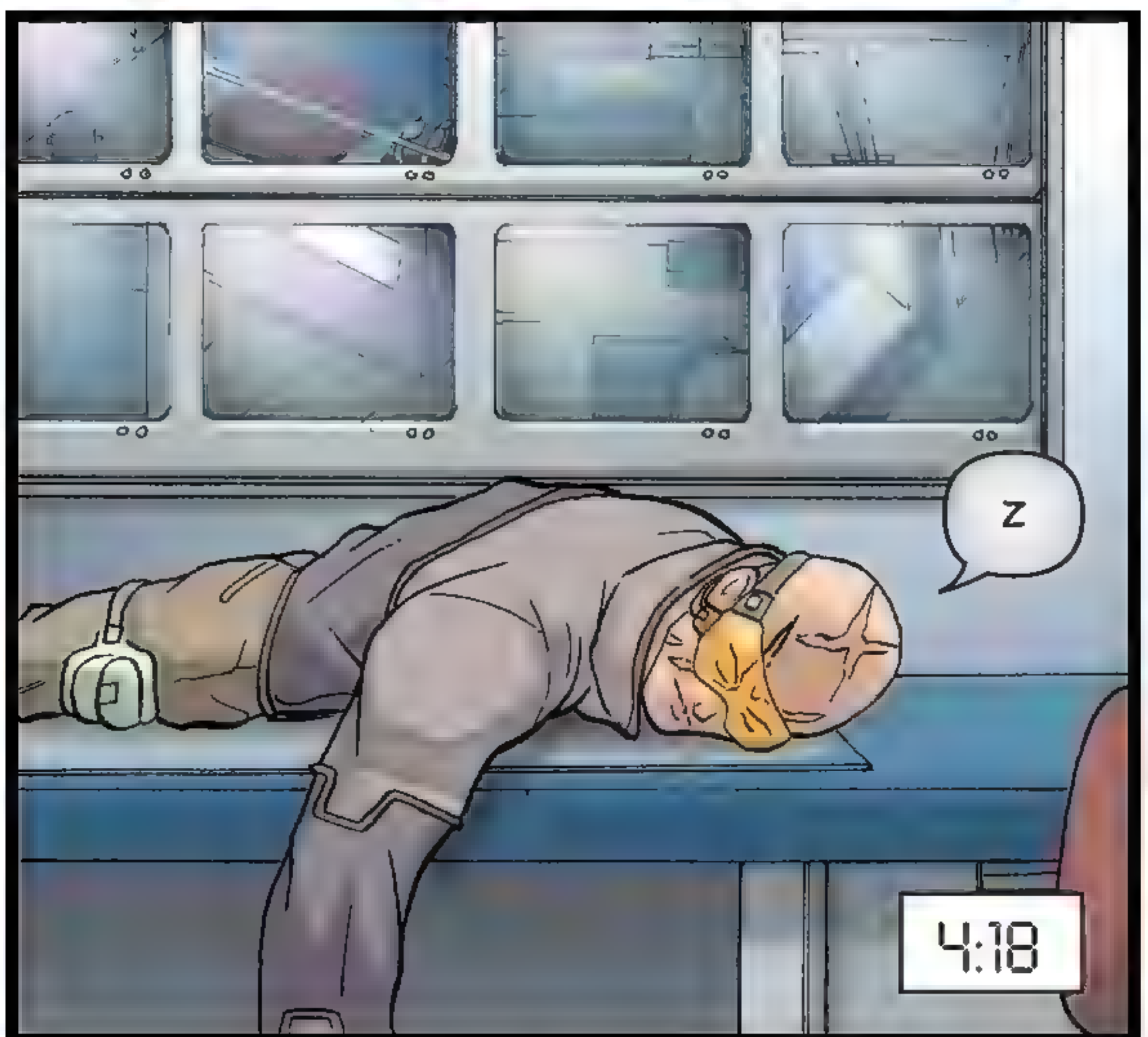
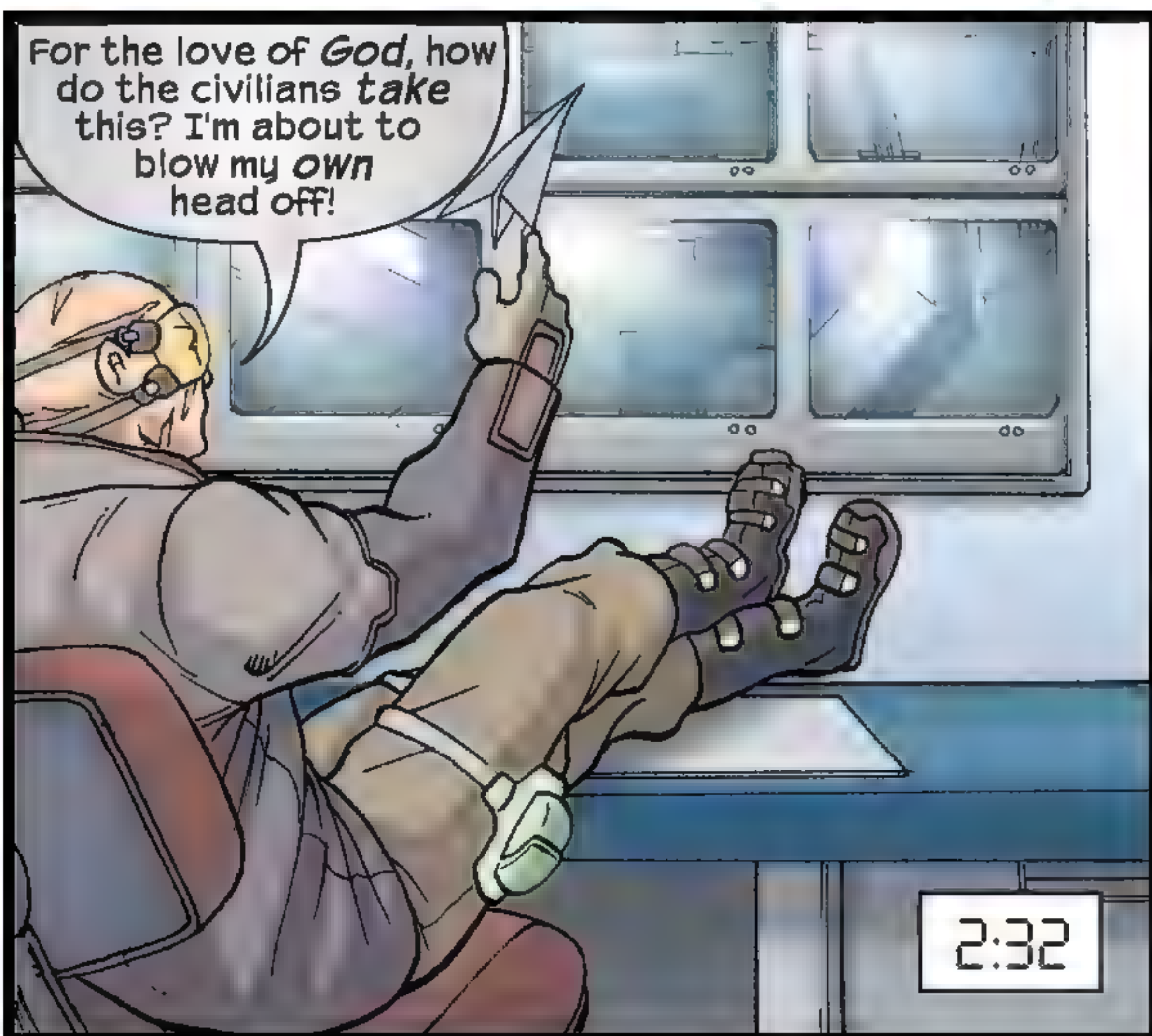
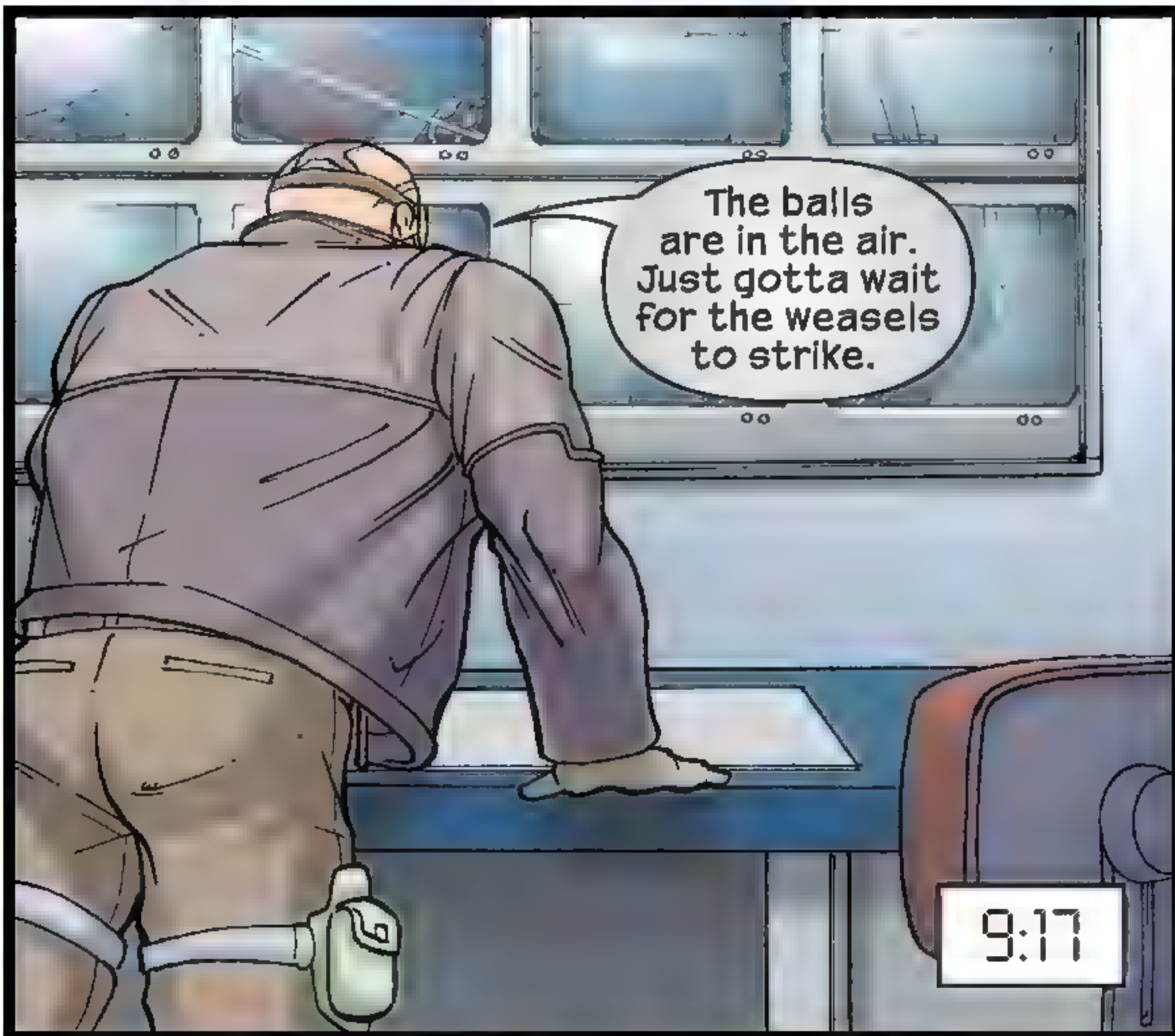
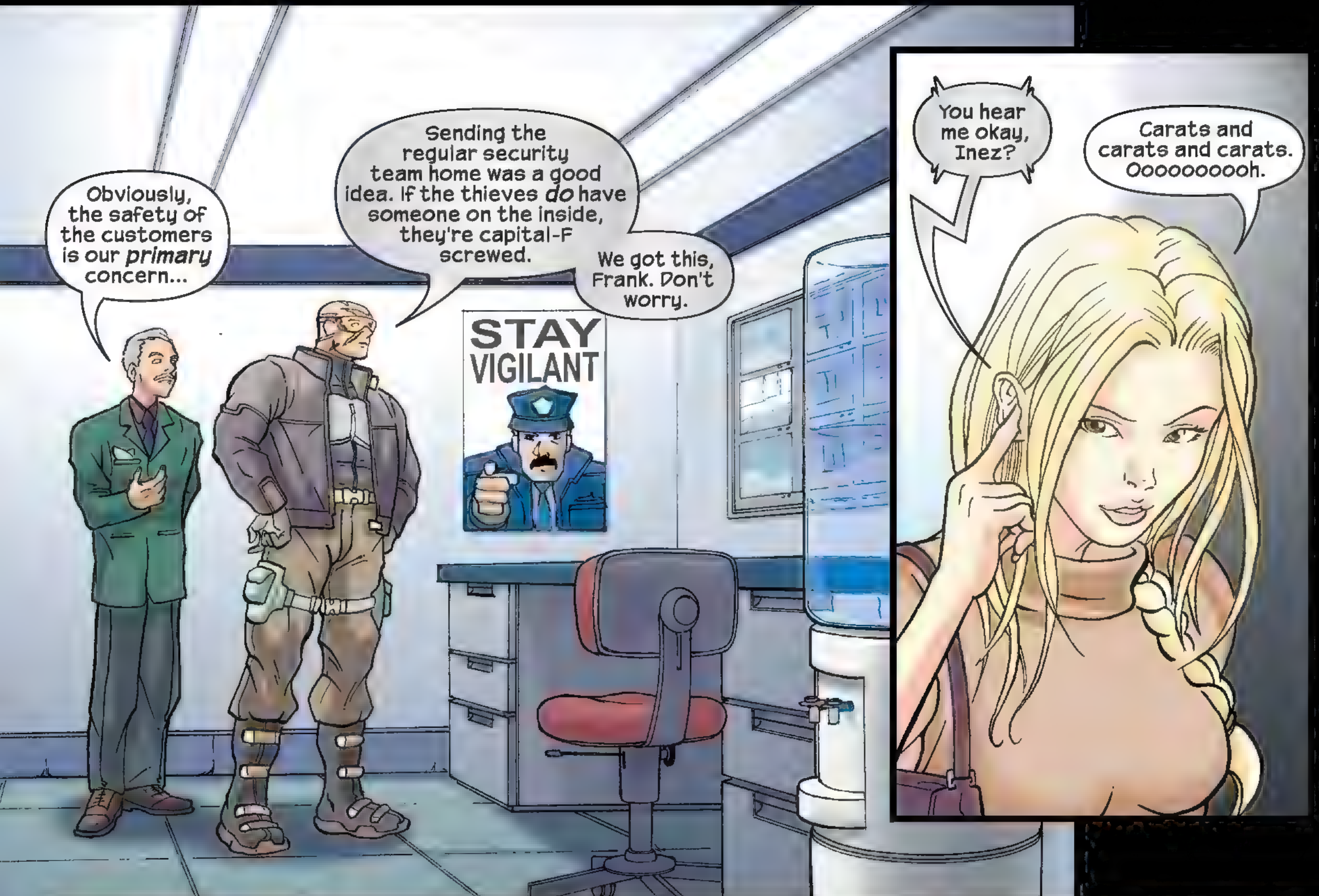
Grab that jug of cleanser!

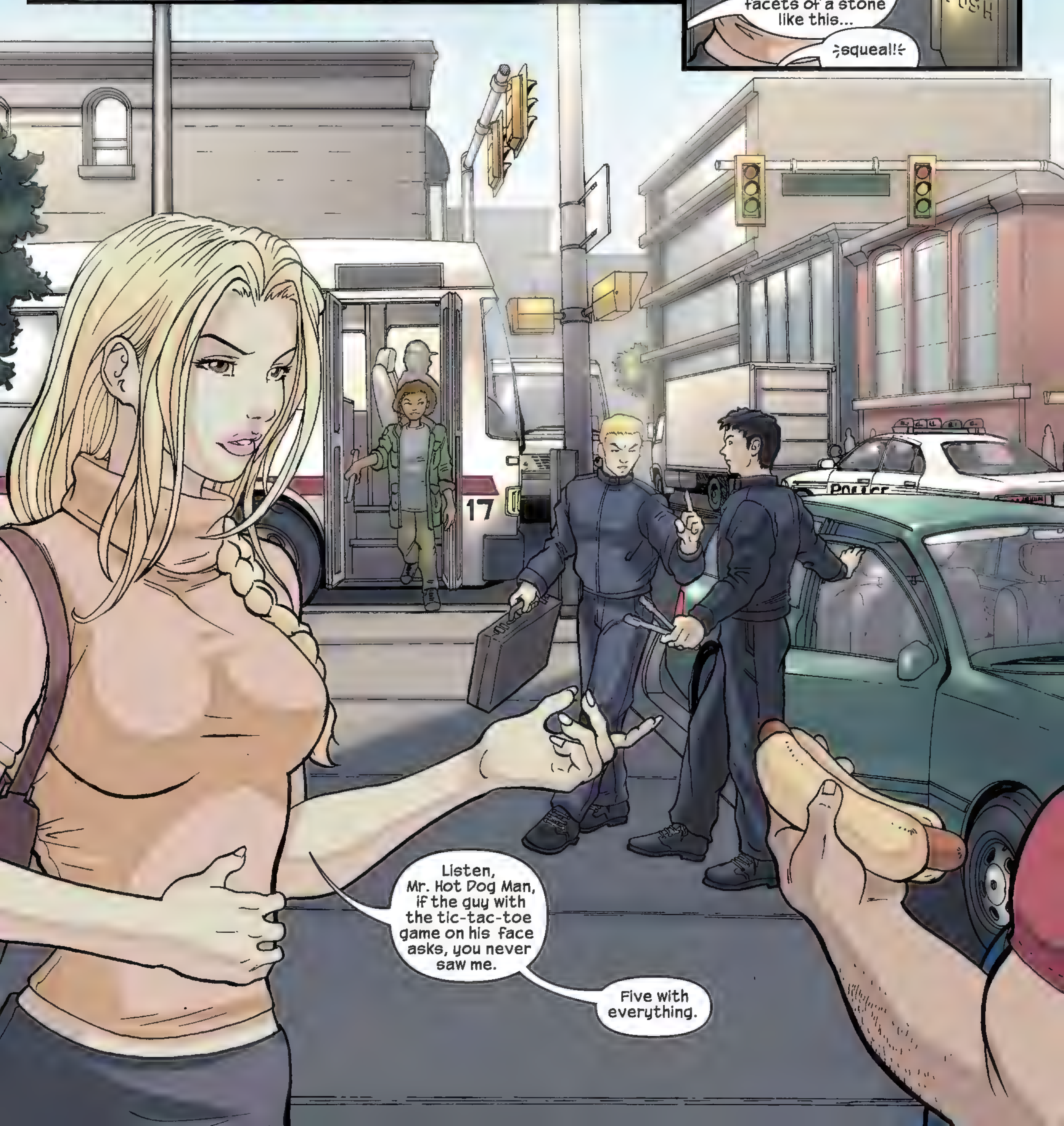
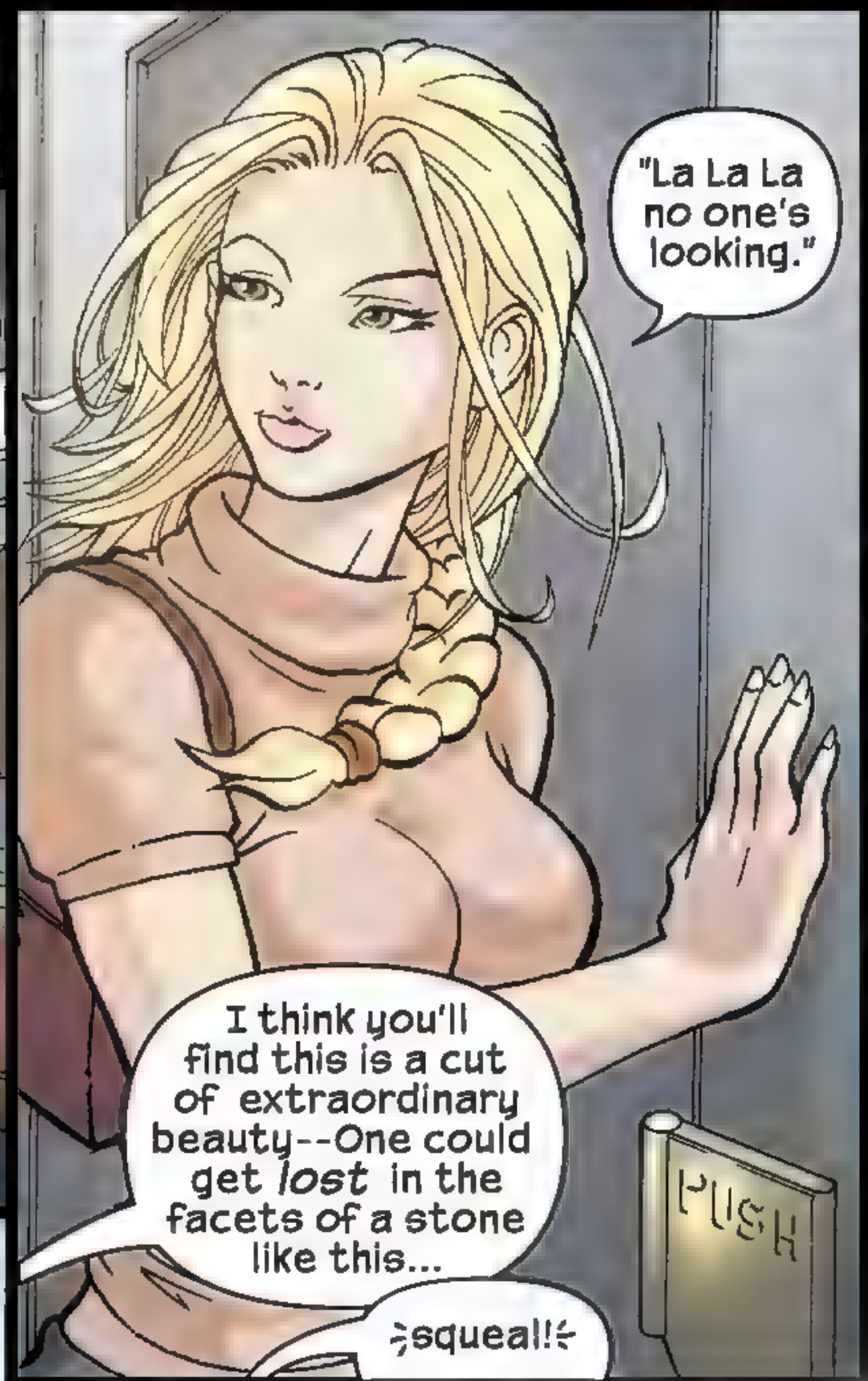
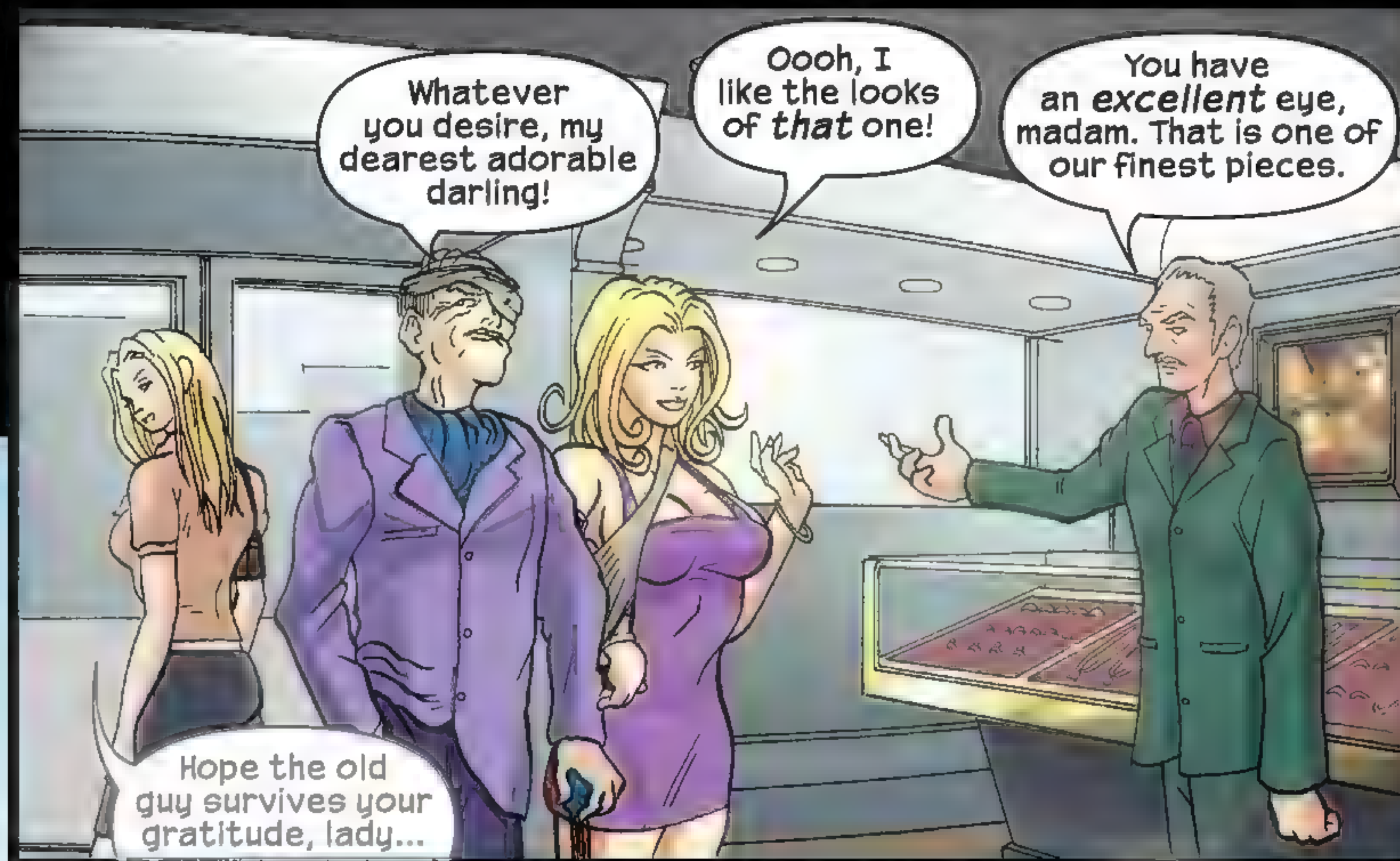
Let's see who can vomit first!

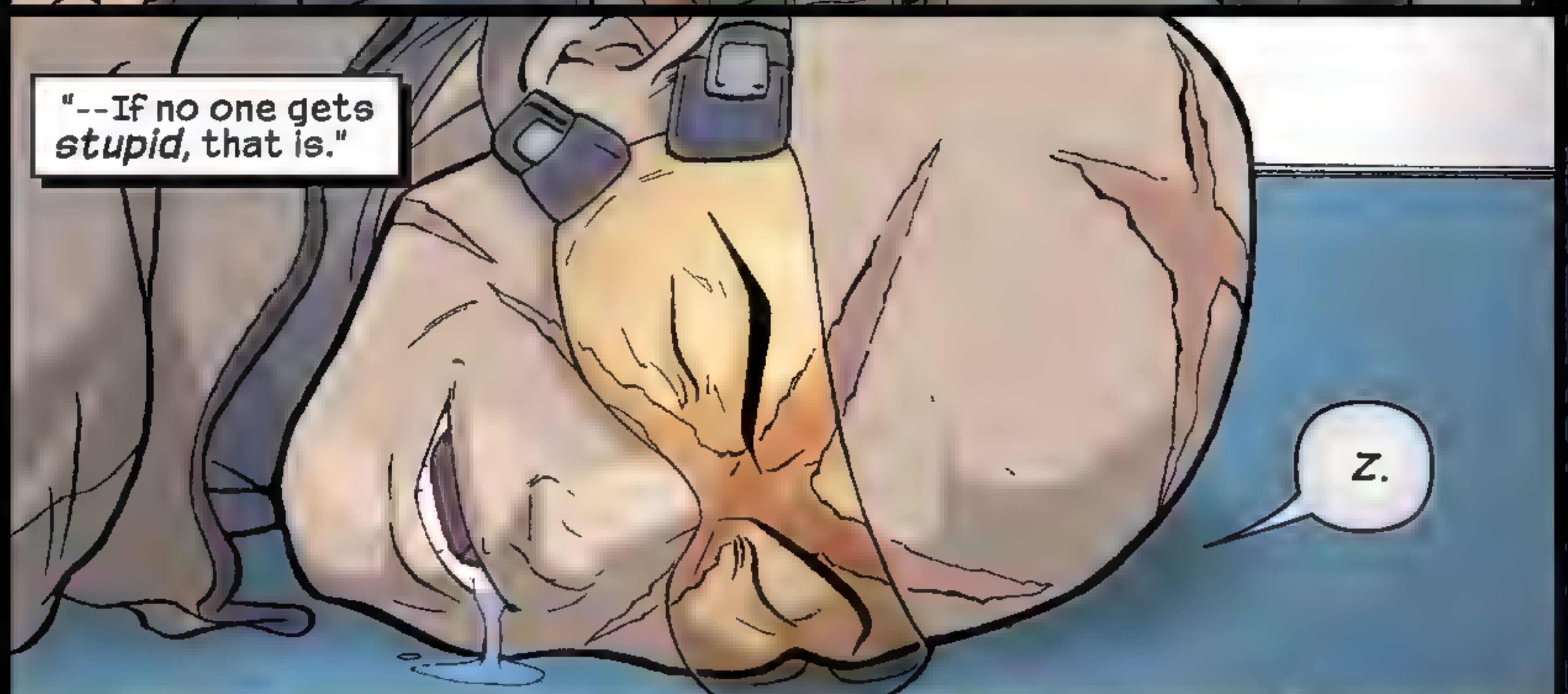
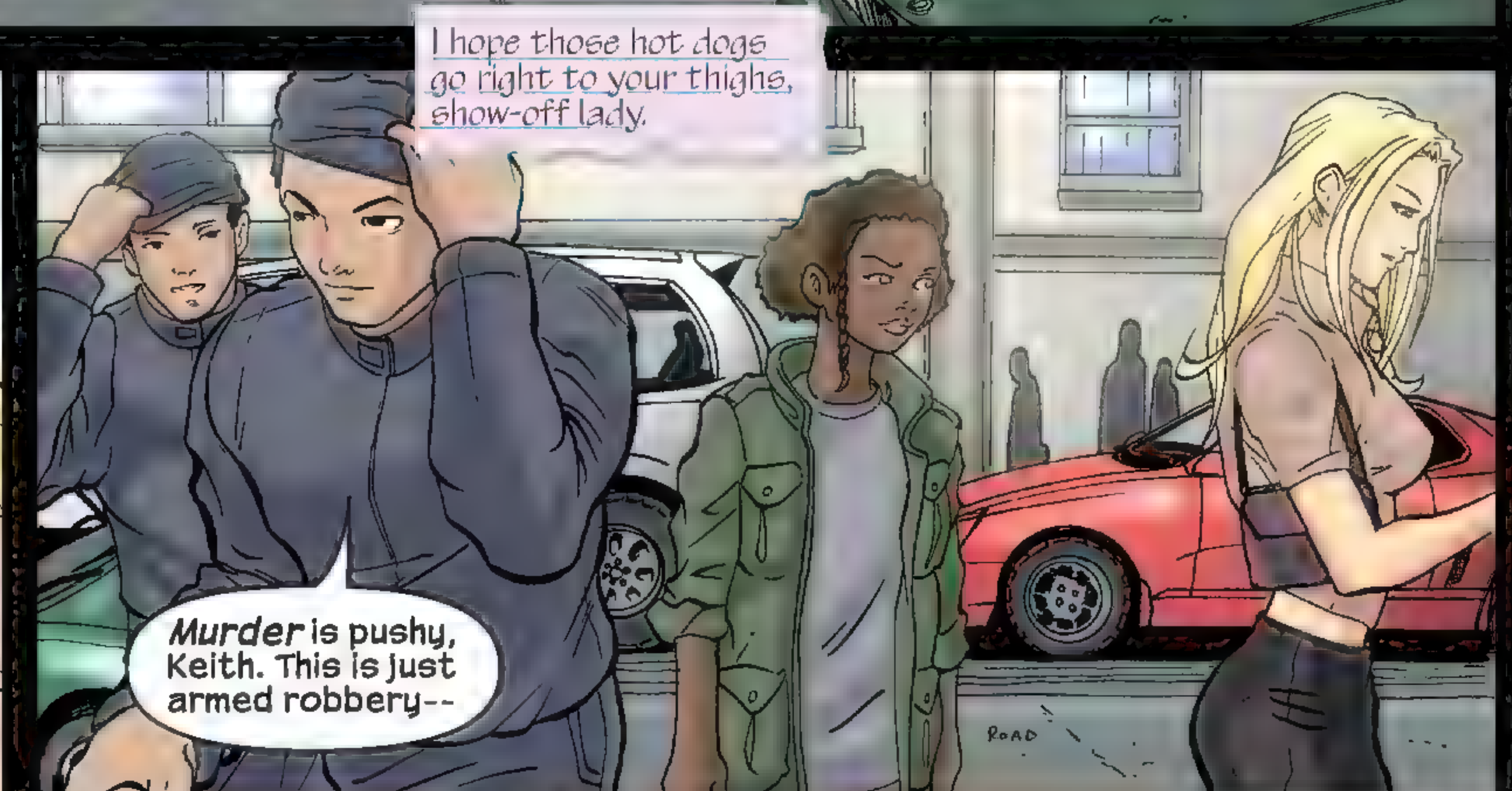
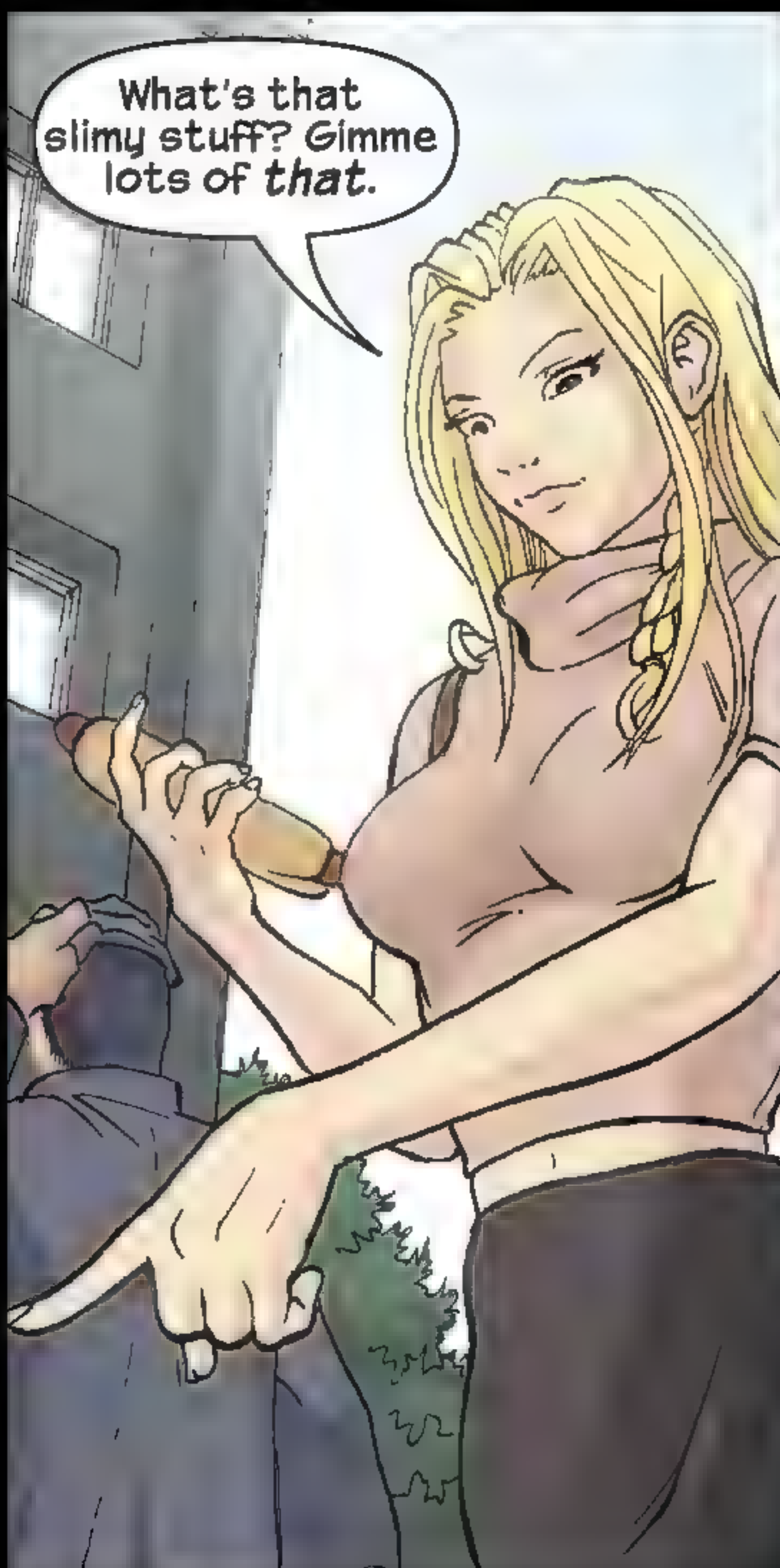
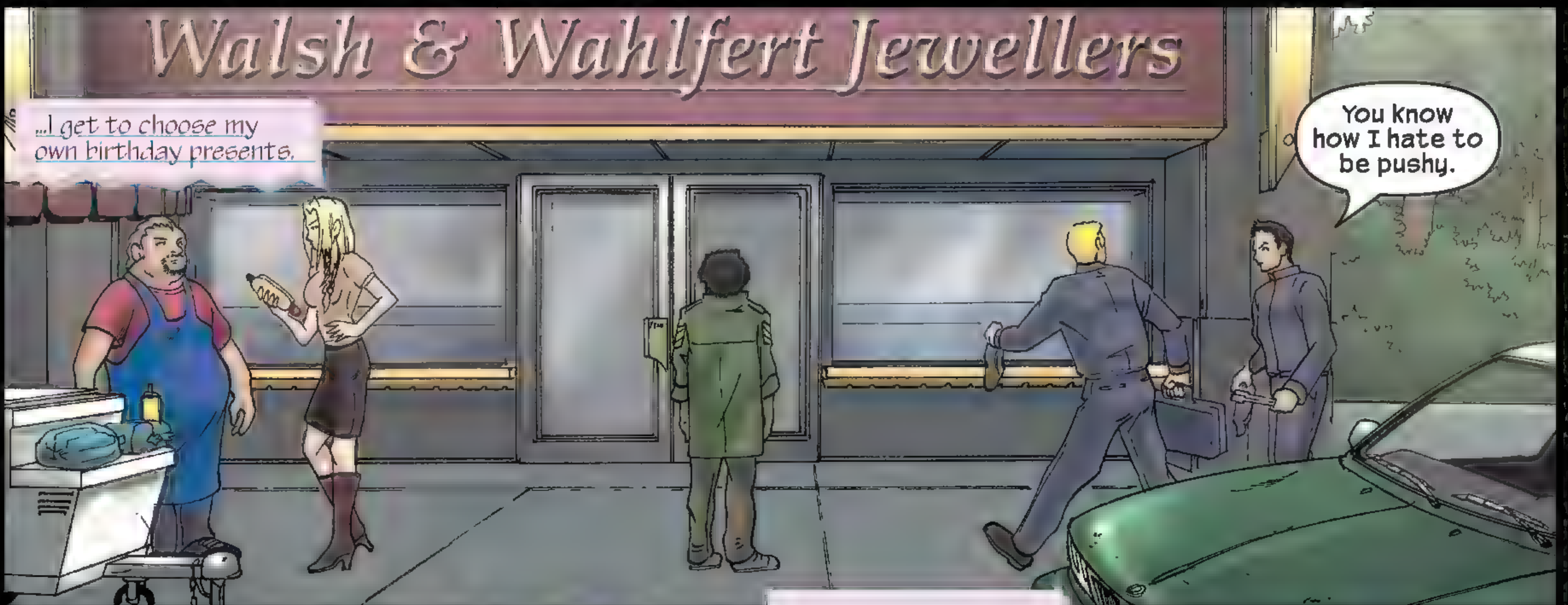


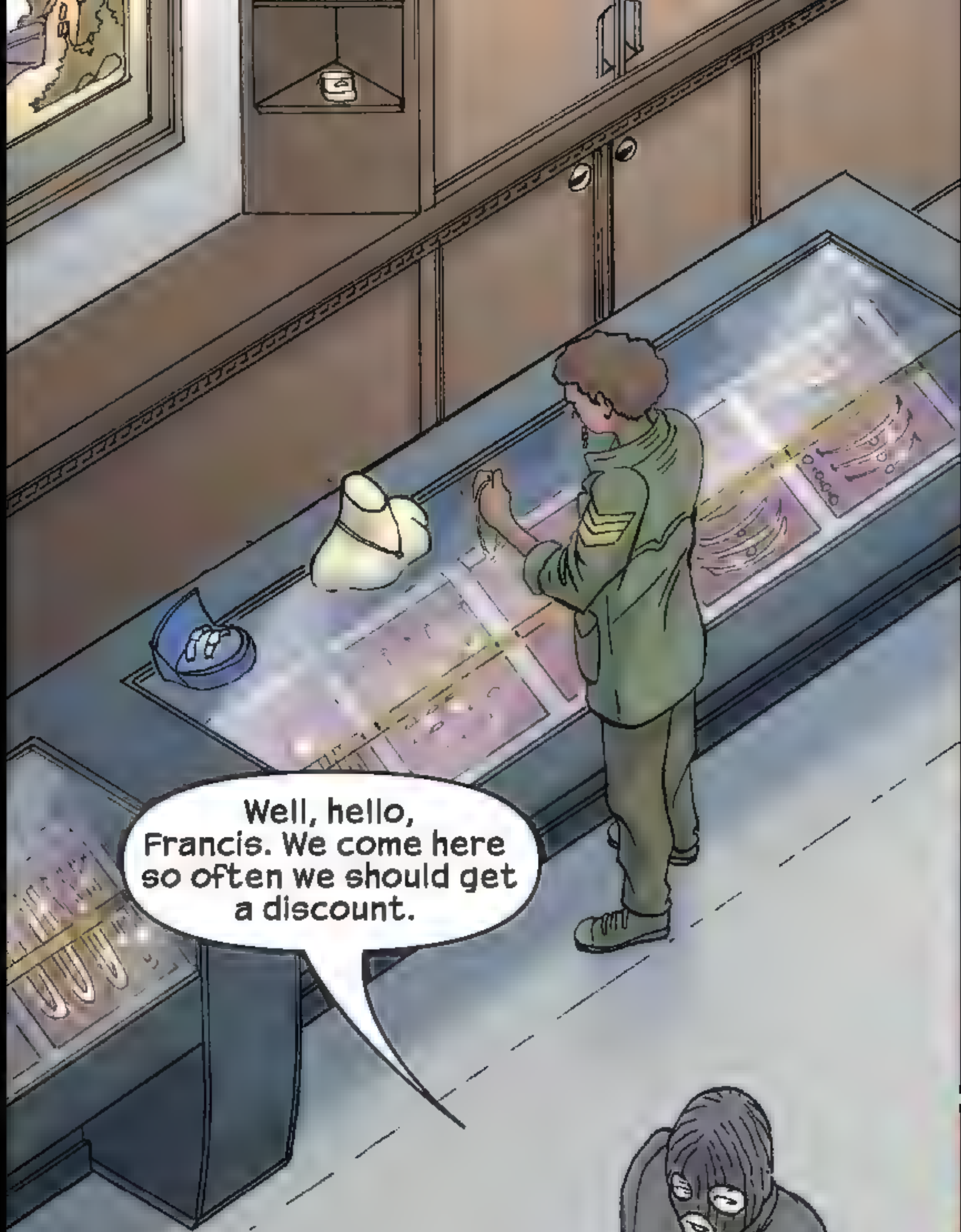












Well, hello, Francis. We come here so often we should get a discount.



What? What's going on?

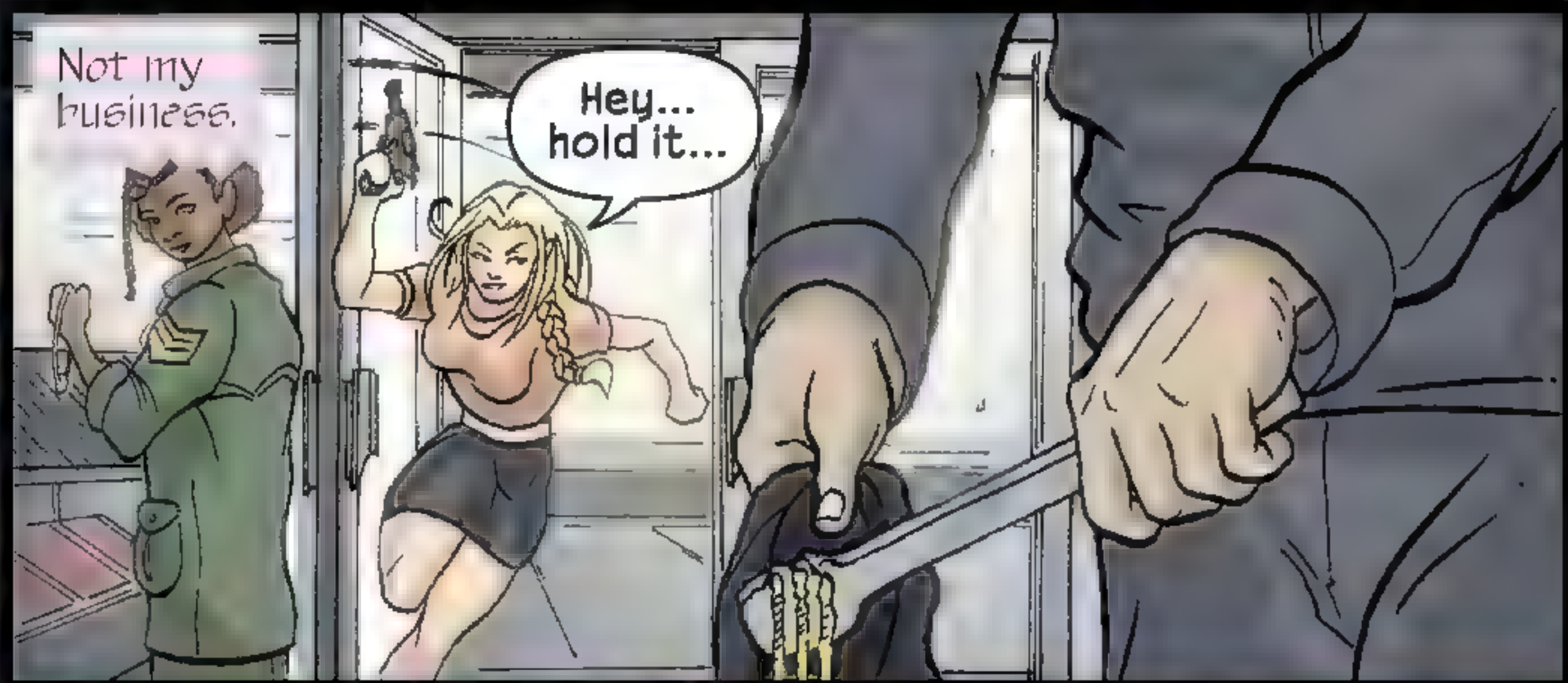
You... You!

I've just hit the silent alarm. The police will be here within minutes.



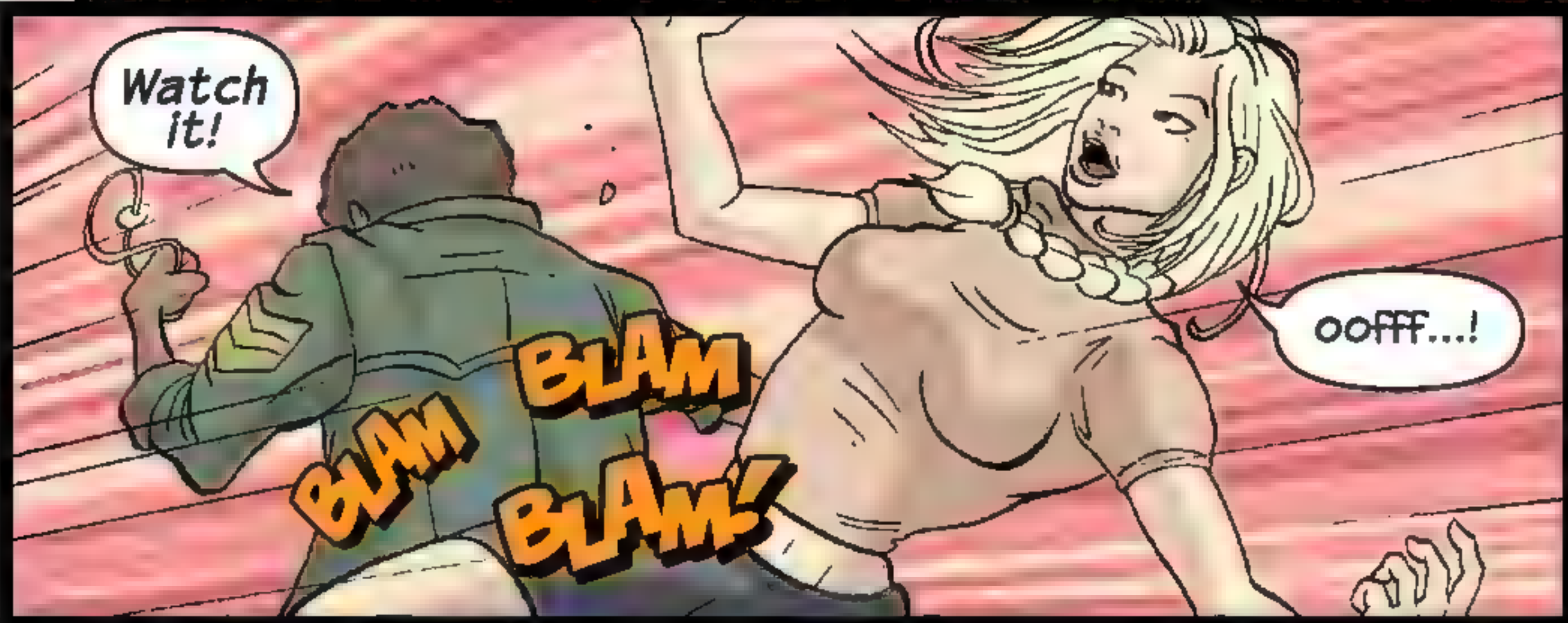
Yeah, that'd be scary. But you know what I did?

I paid a mess of fast kids to trip the alarms at twelve other stores within an eight block radius. I think we have time.



Not my business.

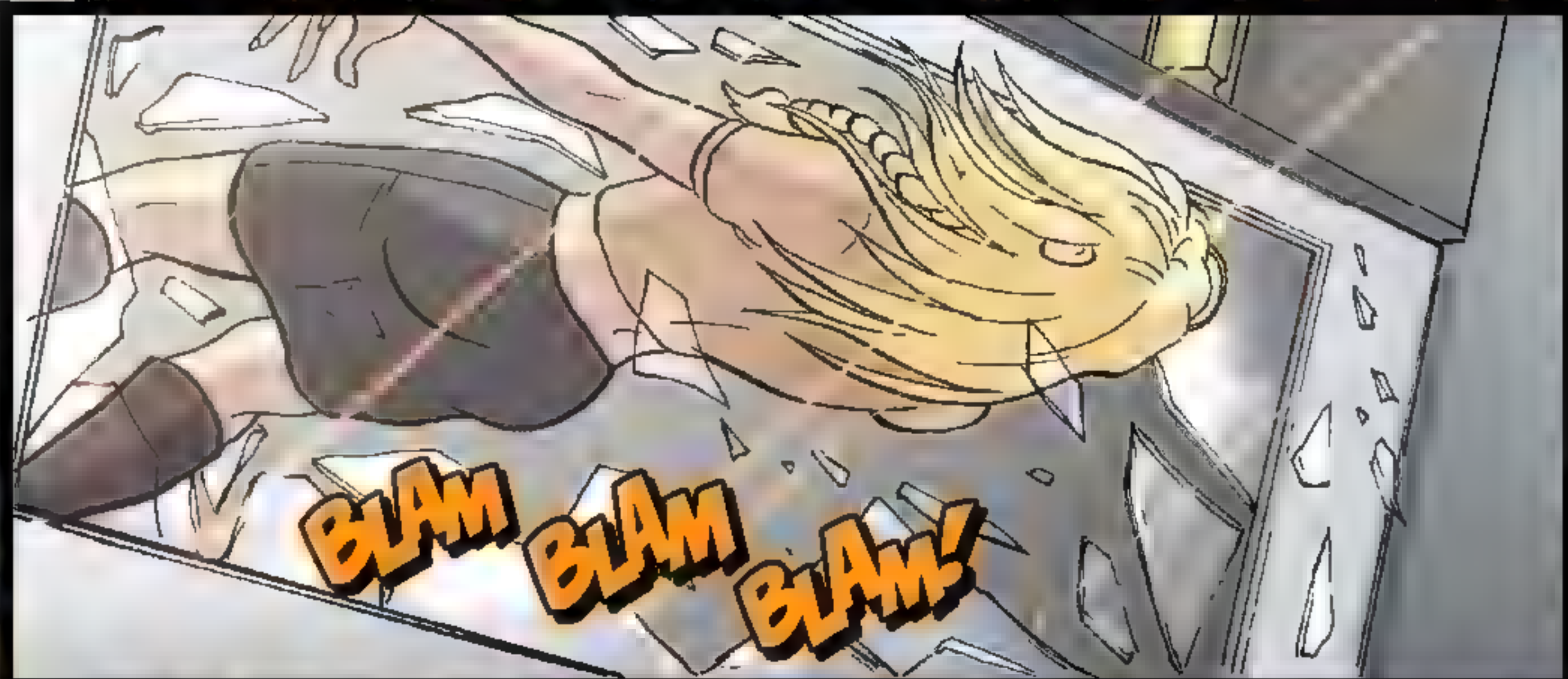
Hey... hold it...



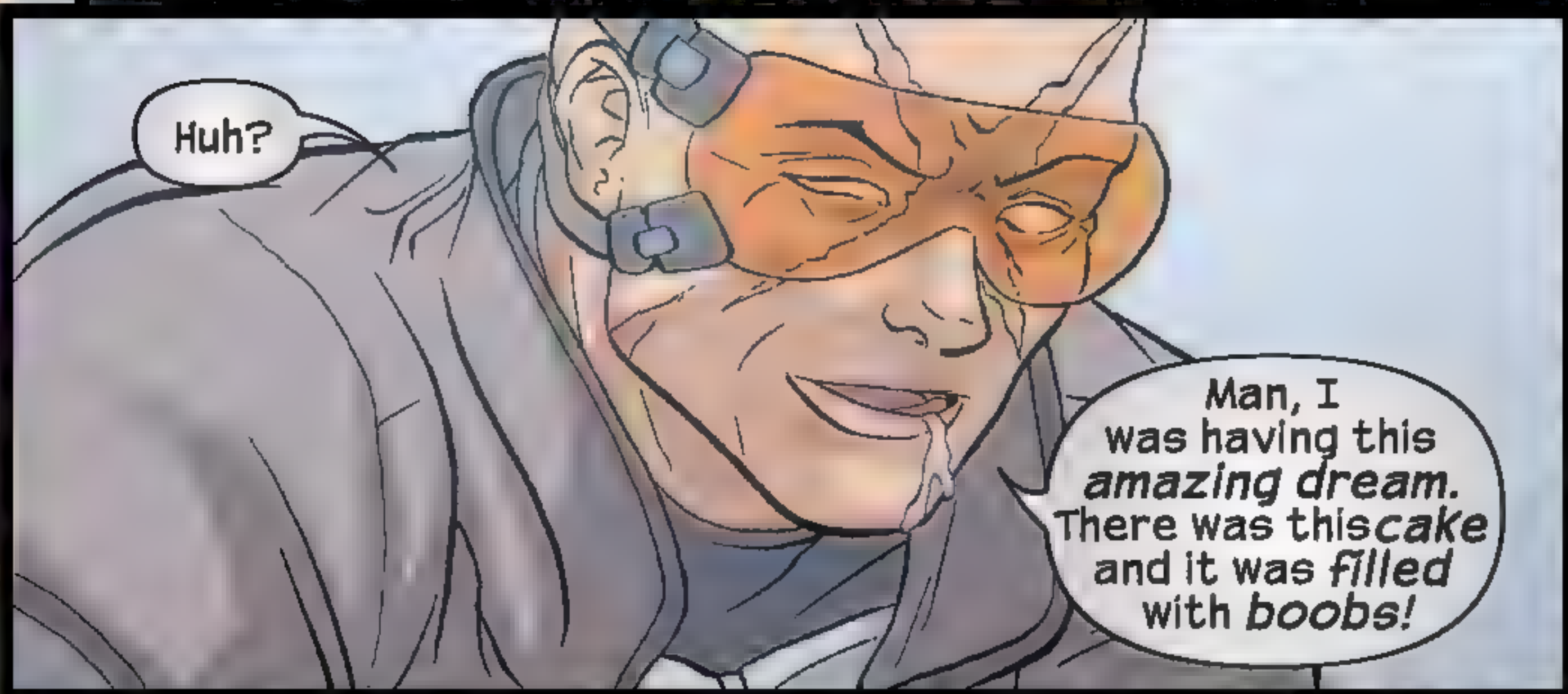
Watch it!

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM!

oofff...!



BLAM
BLAM
BLAM!

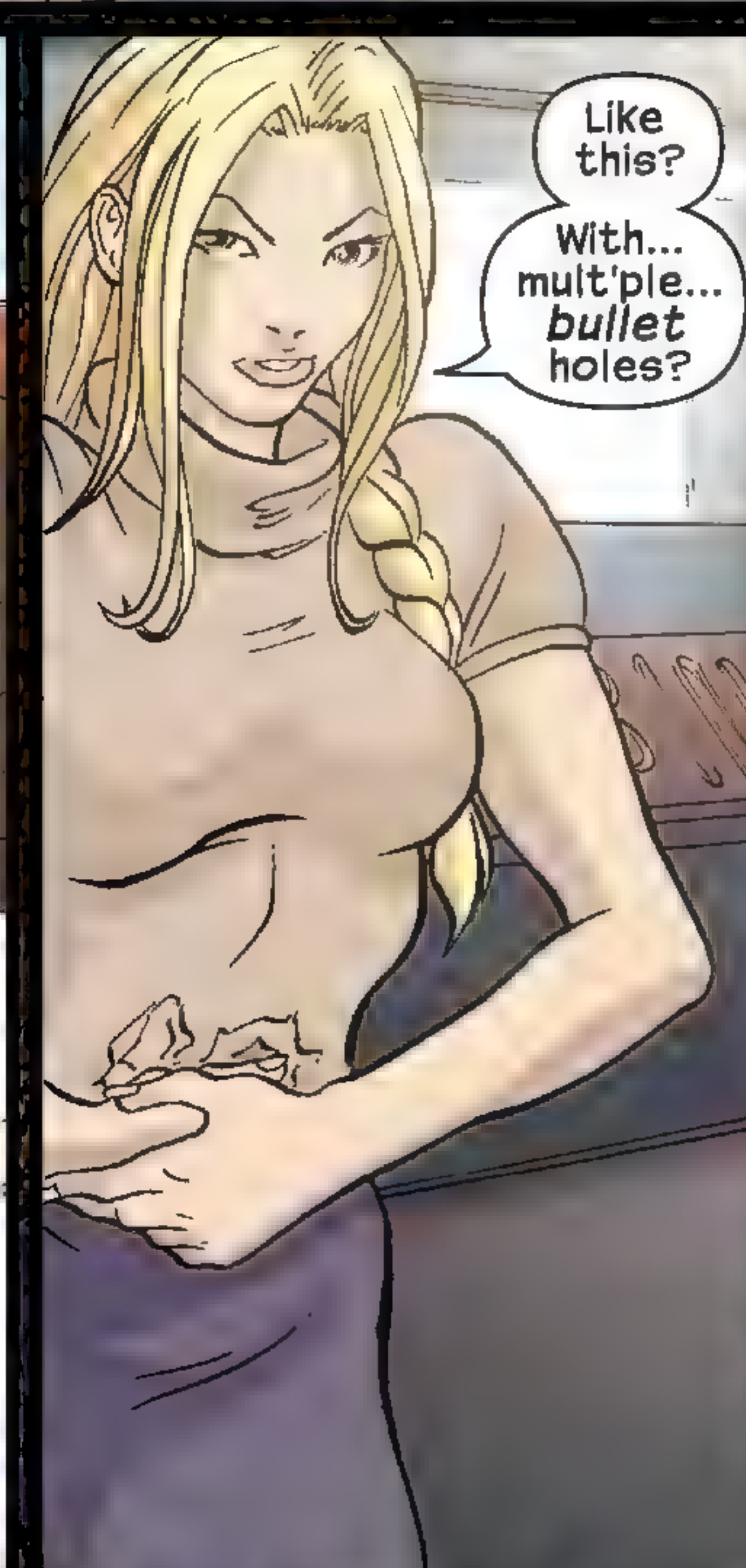
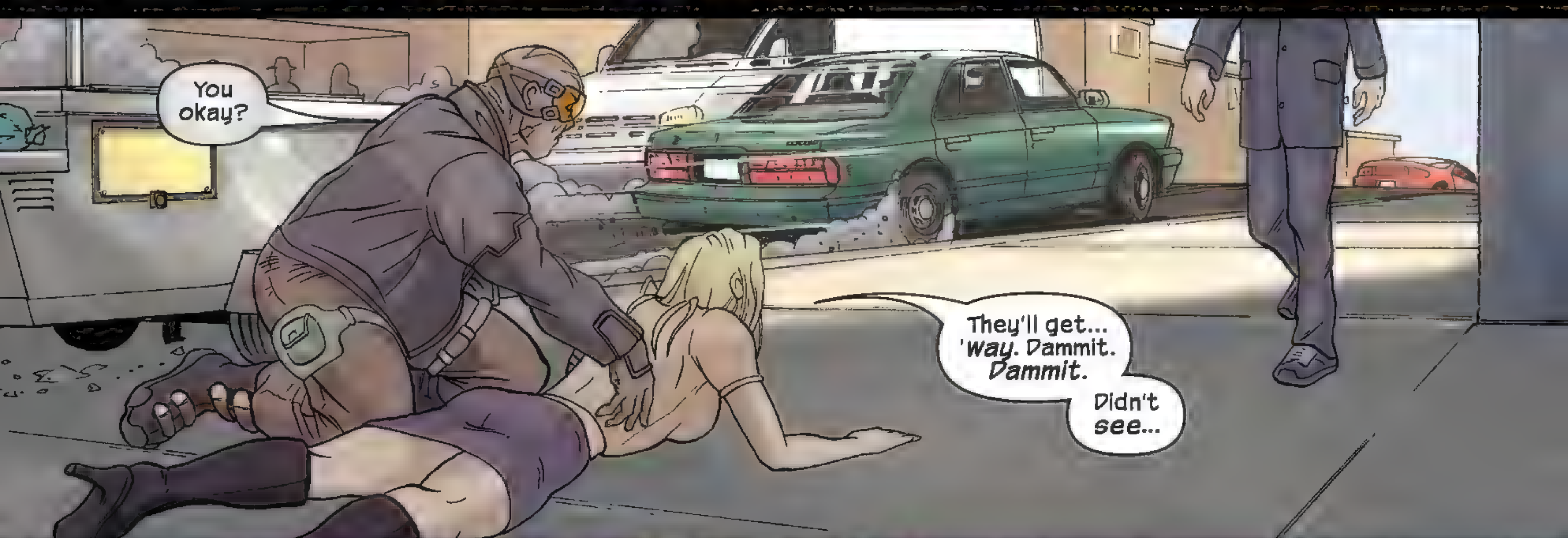
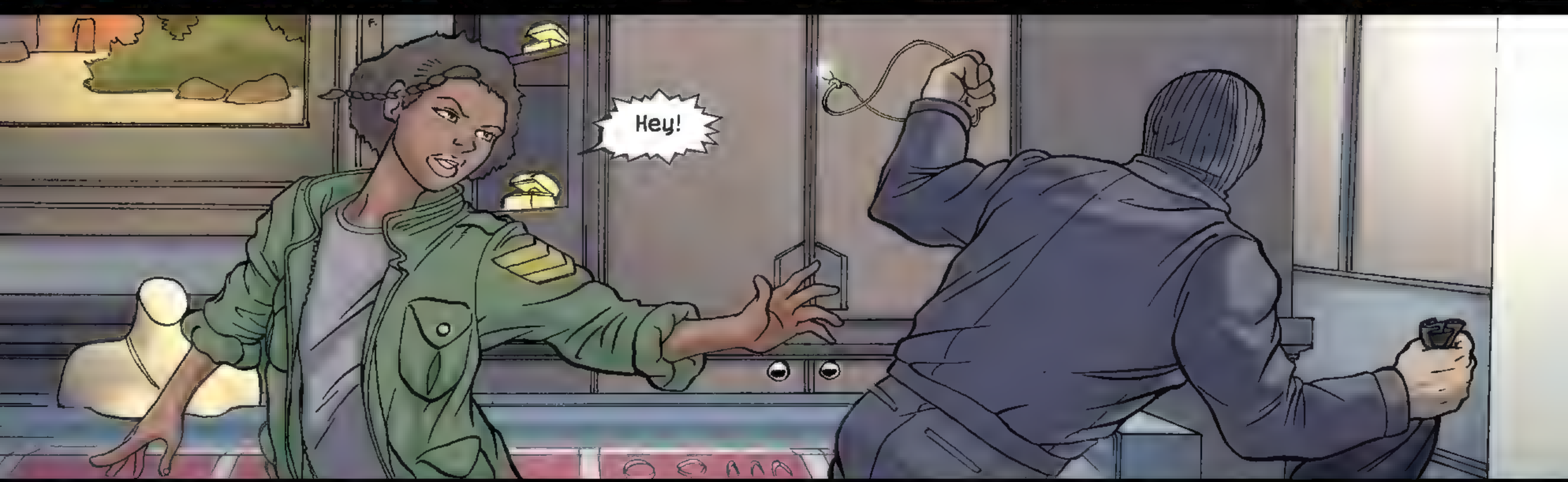


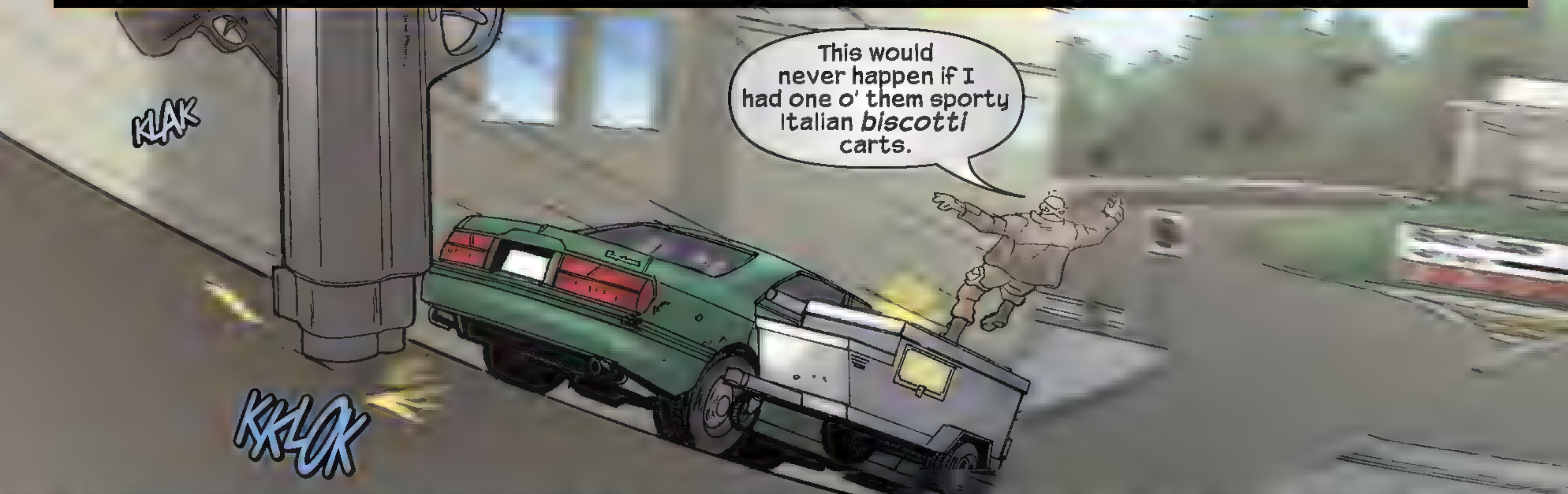
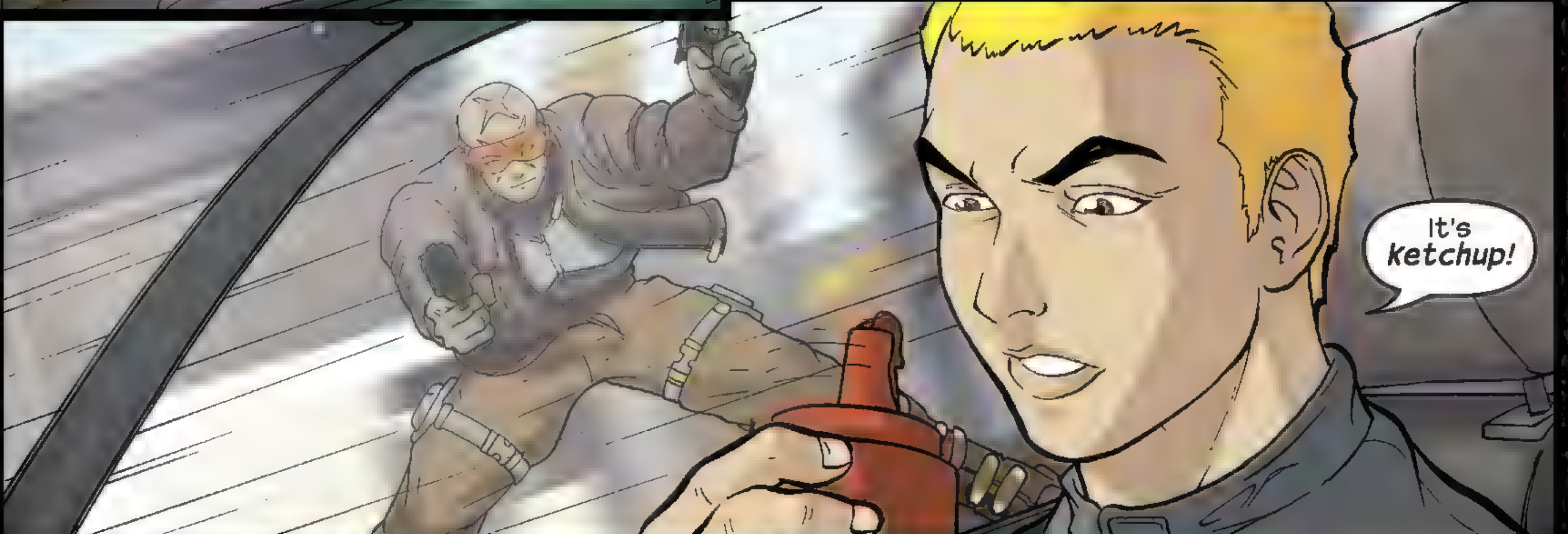
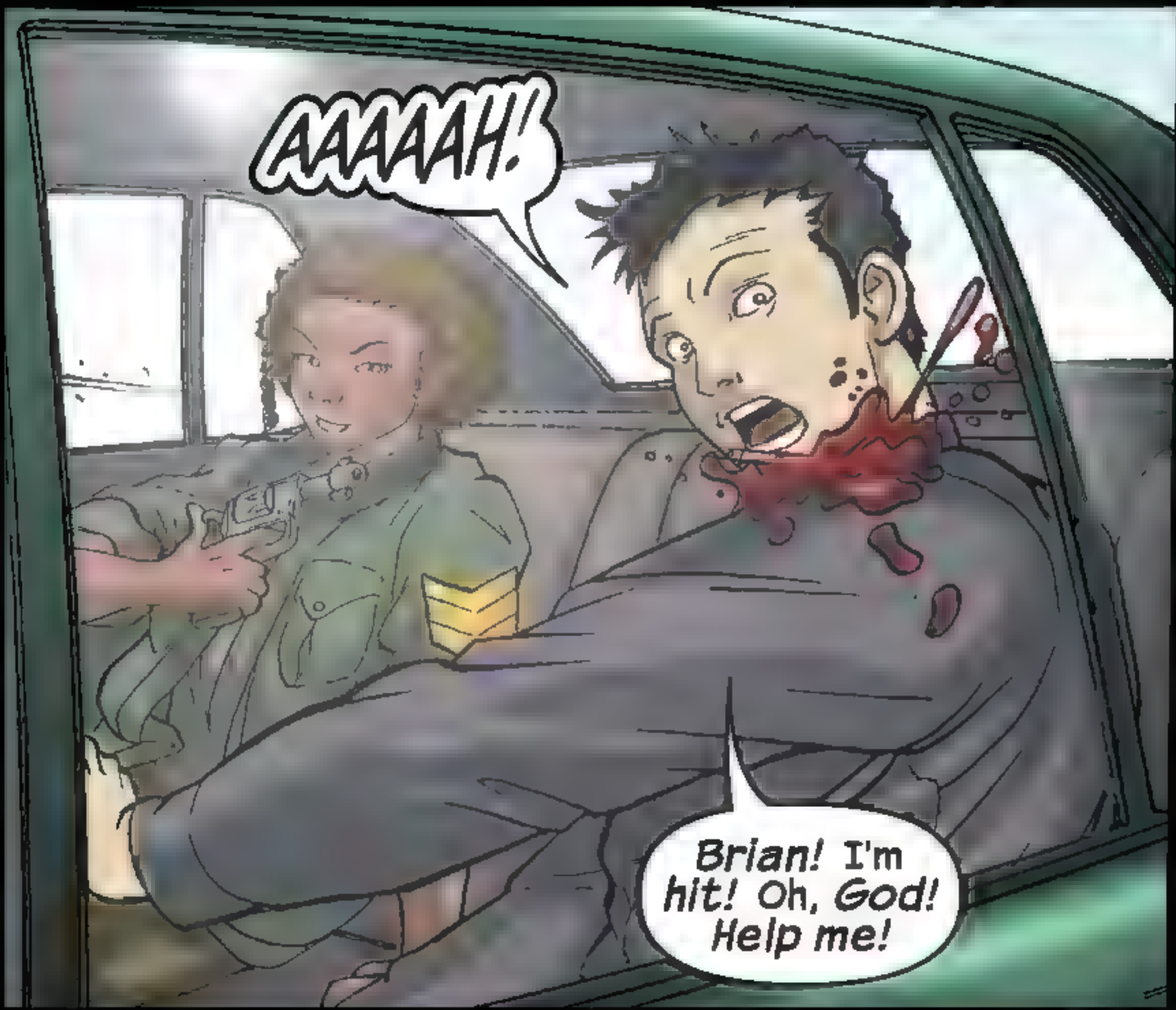
Huh?

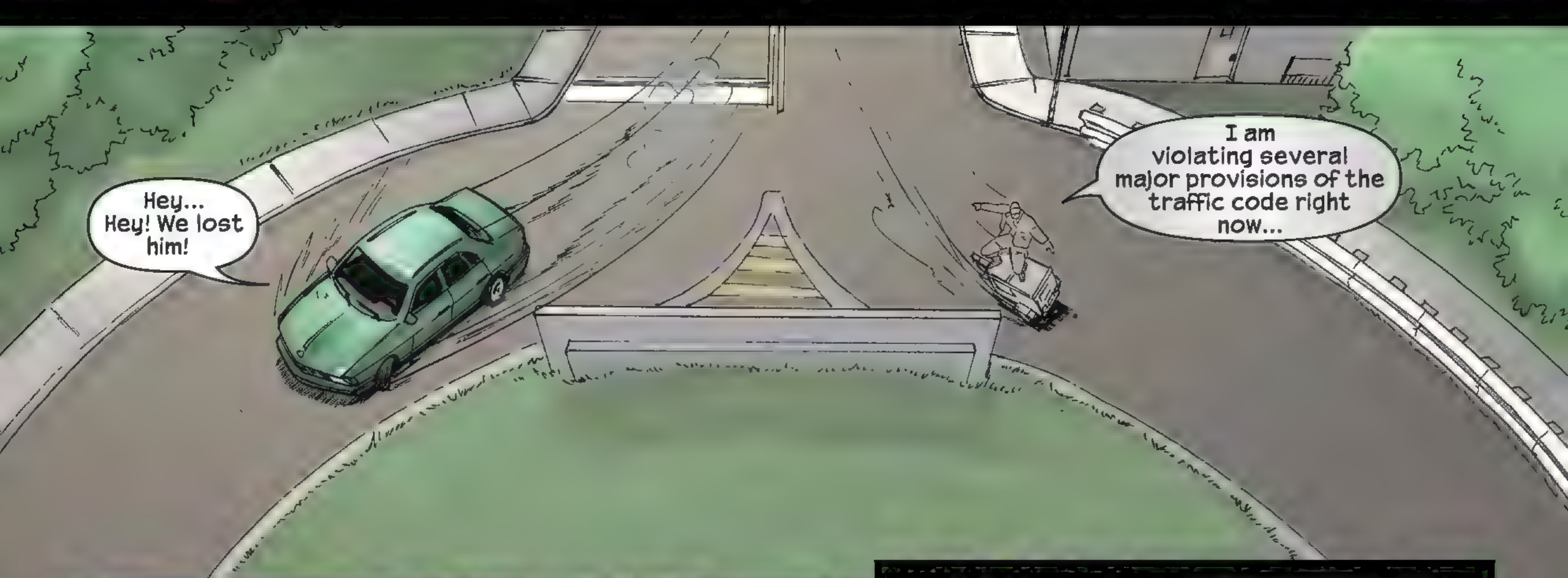
Man, I was having this amazing dream. There was this cake and it was filled with boobs!



Dammit!





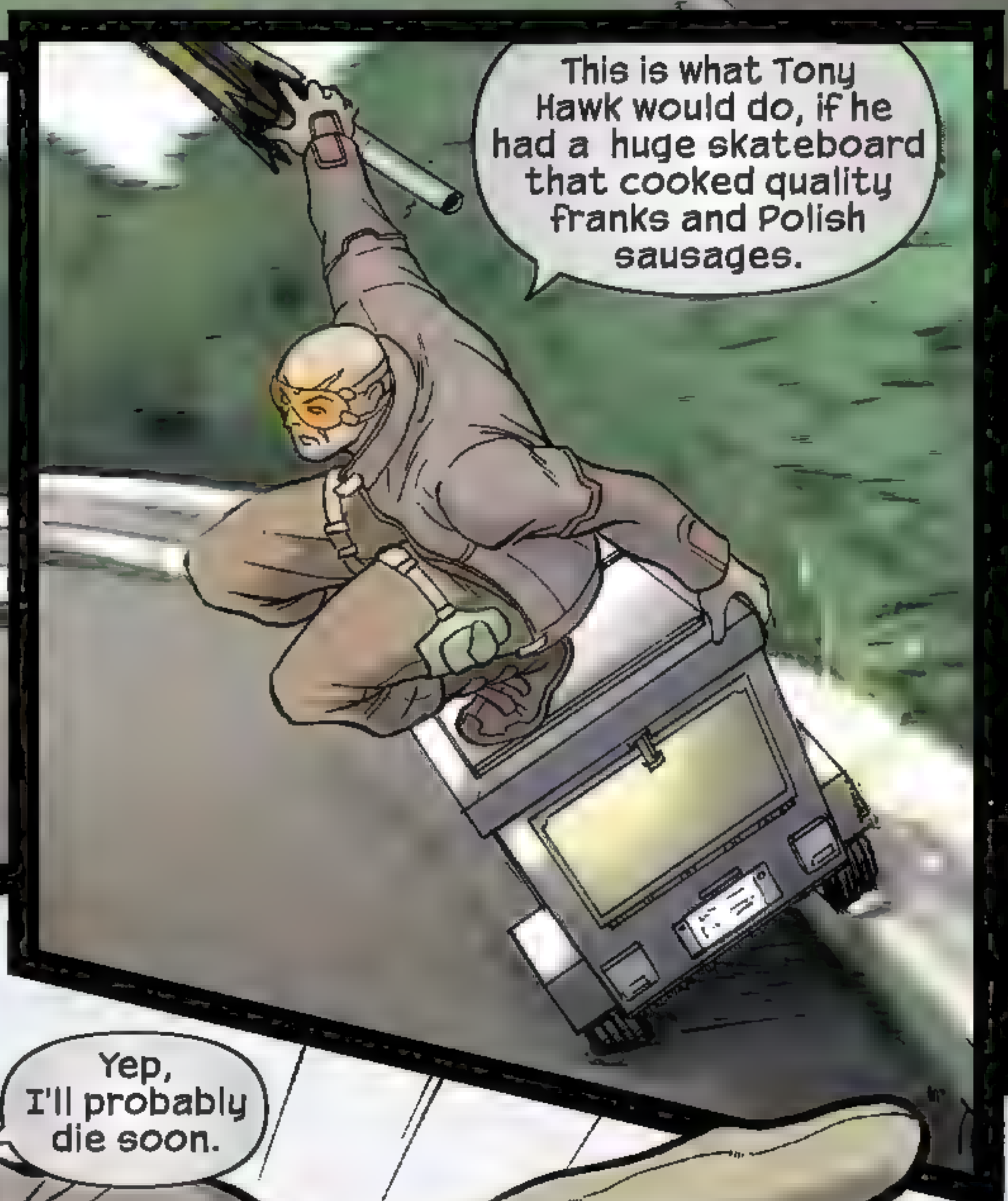


Hey...
Hey! We lost
him!

I am
violating several
major provisions of the
traffic code right
now...



Could
get ugly...



This is what Tony
Hawk would do, if he
had a huge skateboard
that cooked quality
franks and Polish
sausages.



"If everybody
had a dog cart, Across
the U.S.A...!"

Yep,
I'll probably
die soon.

SPLORSH

Aw, tell me
I didn't step in
the dog juice.



Yeah, yeah,
we lost
the freak!

Uh...I
don't think
so, Brian.

If we live, I'm
shooting all
you guys.

It's raining
hog-snouts and
mayonnaise.

Like a poet's
beautiful dream.

I know what
you're thinking.
You're thinking, he
lost his guns, right?
How dangerous
can he be?

Well, I'll tell
you the truth. In
all the chaos, I got a
little confused myself. So
I guess the question
you have to ask
yourself is...

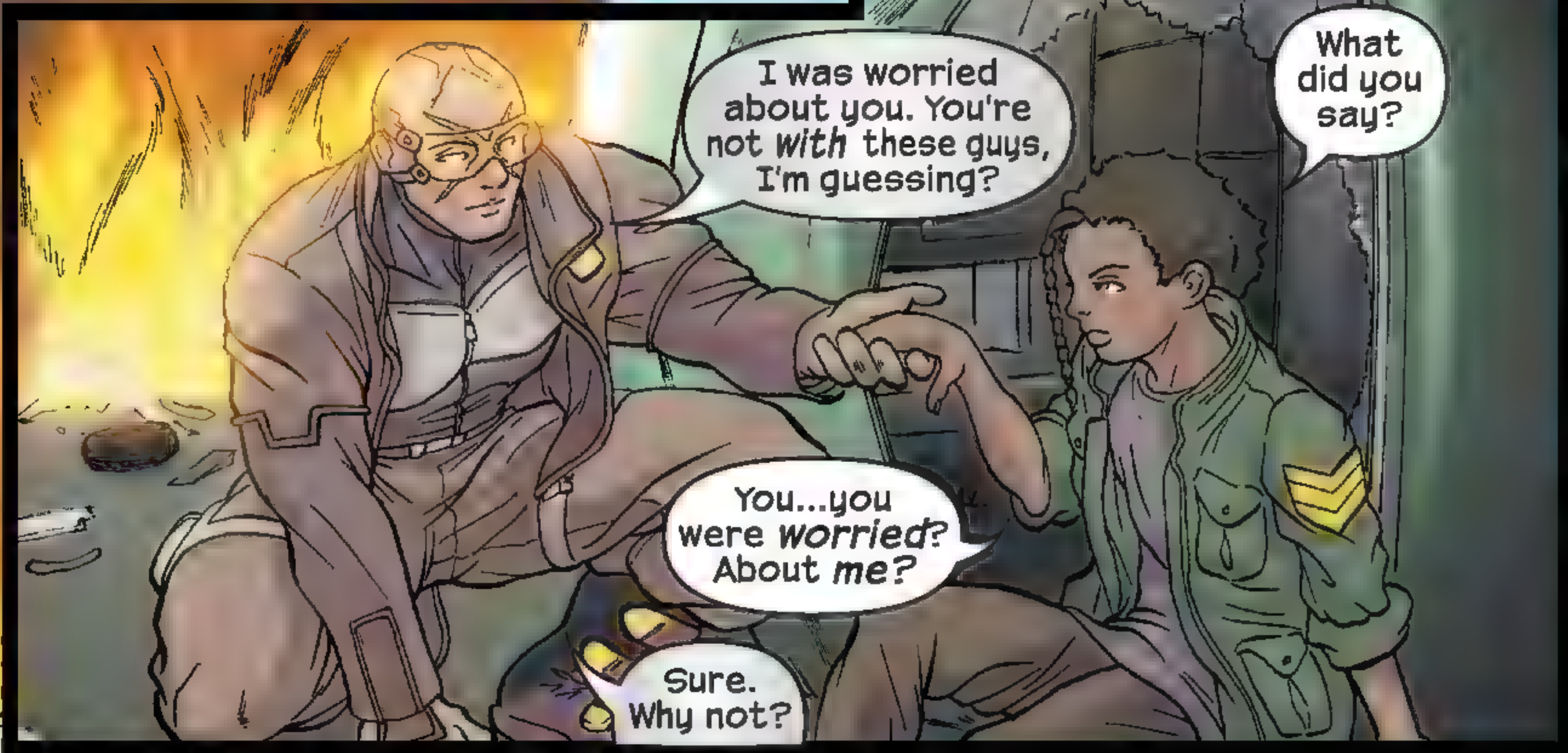
ughgh...
no. NO.

"...is
this wiener
loaded?"



Hey, you
okay in there,
little girl?

I'm okay...



I was worried
about you. You're
not *with* these guys,
I'm guessing?

What
did you
say?

You...you
were *worried*?
About me?

Sure.
Why not?



And that's how
I met the man I'm
going to marry.

MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!

?!!?

Oh, sure,
give the cops
another reason
to throw me
in jail...

**NEXT ISSUE:
HIGH FINANCE AND
WEIRD ROMANCE!**

MARVEL

4

AGENT X

SIMONE
LEE
UDON





TO MOST, THE LETTER X STANDS FOR AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY. THE UNDERWORLD IS NO EXCEPTION. FOR PEOPLE WITH EVIL INTENT, IT STANDS FOR ALEX HAYDEN, THE HIRED GUN WITH NO PAST AND A BURNING DESIRE TO TAKE HIS POSITION AS THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST AND HIGHEST PAID MERCENARY.

STAN LEE PRESENTS...

AGENT X

WRITER GAIL SIMONE ART AND COLOR ALVIN LEE, ROB ROSS, OMAR DOGAN, THEREALT!, SHANE LAW, CALVIN LO, & KEN SIU-CHONG UDON CHIEF ERIC KO
LETTERS CORY PETIT ASSISTANT EDITOR LYNNE YOSHII
EDITOR ANDREW LIS EDITOR IN CHIEF JOE QUESADA PRESIDENT BILL JEMAS



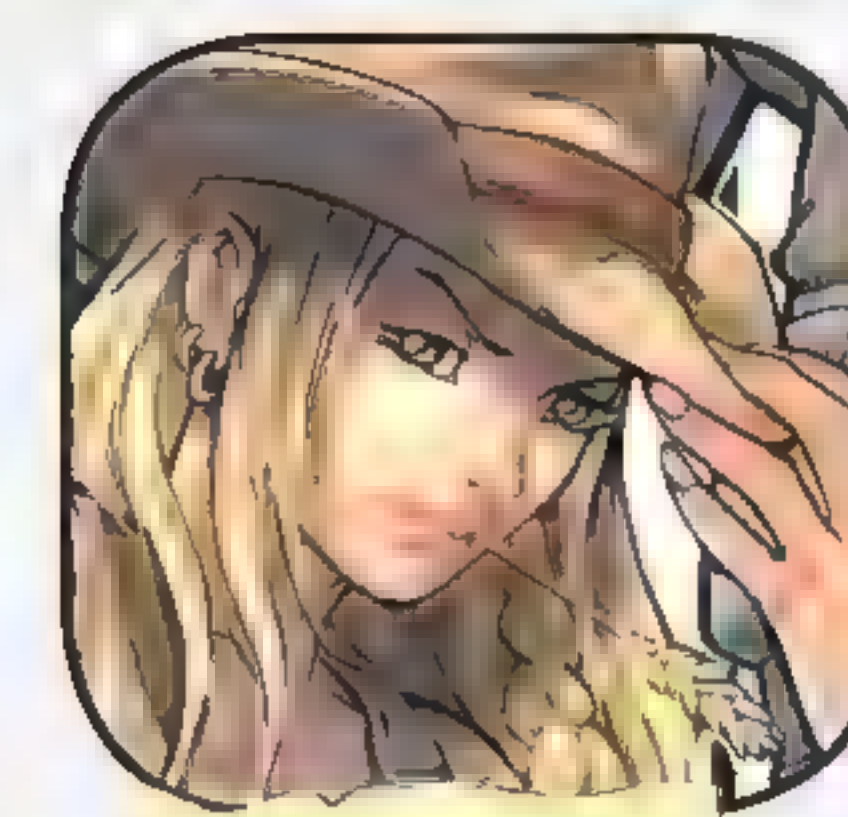
ALEX



SANDI



TASKMASTER

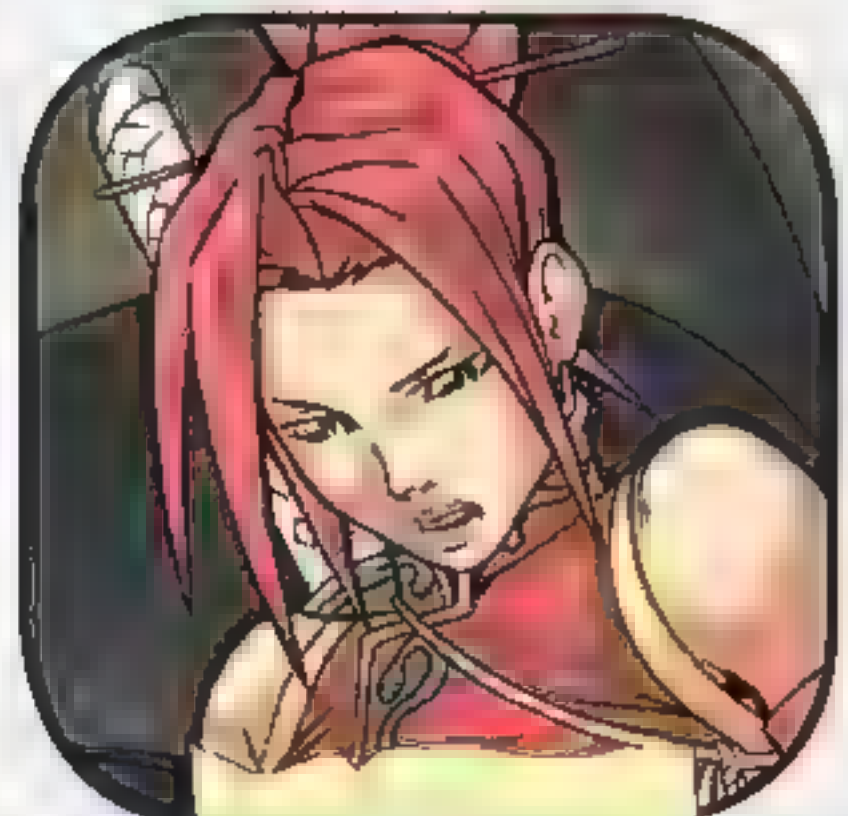


OUTLAW

DEAD MAN'S SWITCH PART FOUR: INVISIBLE



HIGASHI



SAGURI



MARY ZERO

PREVIOUSLY
○ EXCERPTED FROM THE JOURNAL OF ALEX HAYDEN: NOTE TO SELF: MAKE CONCENTRATED EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND CHICKS. POSSIBLE CLUE TO MY UNEXPECTED SEX APPEAL = "WASHING". INVESTIGATE VARIETY OF SOAPS, CONTINUE SCRUBBING AT REGULAR INTERVALS.
○ TODAY = GOOD DAY. SINCE I SHOWED UP (WITHOUT ANY MEMORIES) AT HOUSE OF SANDI BRANDENBERG, LIFE HAS MOSTLY BEEN VARIETY OF STAB WOUNDS INFLICTED BY BIG DUMB JERK TASKMASTER, SUPPOSEDLY MY 'TRAINER,' BUT, AS STATED BEFORE, ACTUALLY JUST BIG DUMB JERK, OR B.D.J. FOR SHORT.
○ SANDI HELPING ME IN GOAL TO BECOME BEST MERC EVER. TRUST SANDI ALWAYS COOKS GOOD, DOESN'T STAB, EXPLAINED IMPORTANCE OF WASHING.
○ B.D.J. SENT ME ON DOUBLE-CROSS MISSION. MET OUTLAW, NICE GIRL, SMART, VERY SERIOUS ABOUT TEXAS, ENJOYS HATS. BECOME GOOD FRIENDS. GOOD, GOOD, GOOD FRIENDS. MUCH WASHING FOLLOWED.
○ TODAY, ANGERED CRABBY CRIMINAL REAL ESTATE GUY HIGASHI AND HIS ENFORCER, SAGURI, BOTH IMMUNE TO MY CLEANLINESS SOMEHOW.
○ THEN! WENT ON FIRST REAL PAYING JOB, WAS HIT BY HUNDRED WIENERS. MET GIRL NAMED MARY ZERO WITH WEIRD MUTANT PROBLEM...PEOPLE FORGET SHE'S AROUND, LIKE WALKING AMNESIA CARRIER. DECIDED TO GO (AFTER WASHING) TO CLOSEST RESTAURANT TO EXPLAIN NO-DATING-CHILDREN POLICY...
○



Lusconvic's International
House Of Skâbâ Putra.

I knew I should have ordered the
Rooty Tooty Green and Goaty special,
but I was embarrassed to say it aloud.

Look, would
you quit staring at
me like that?

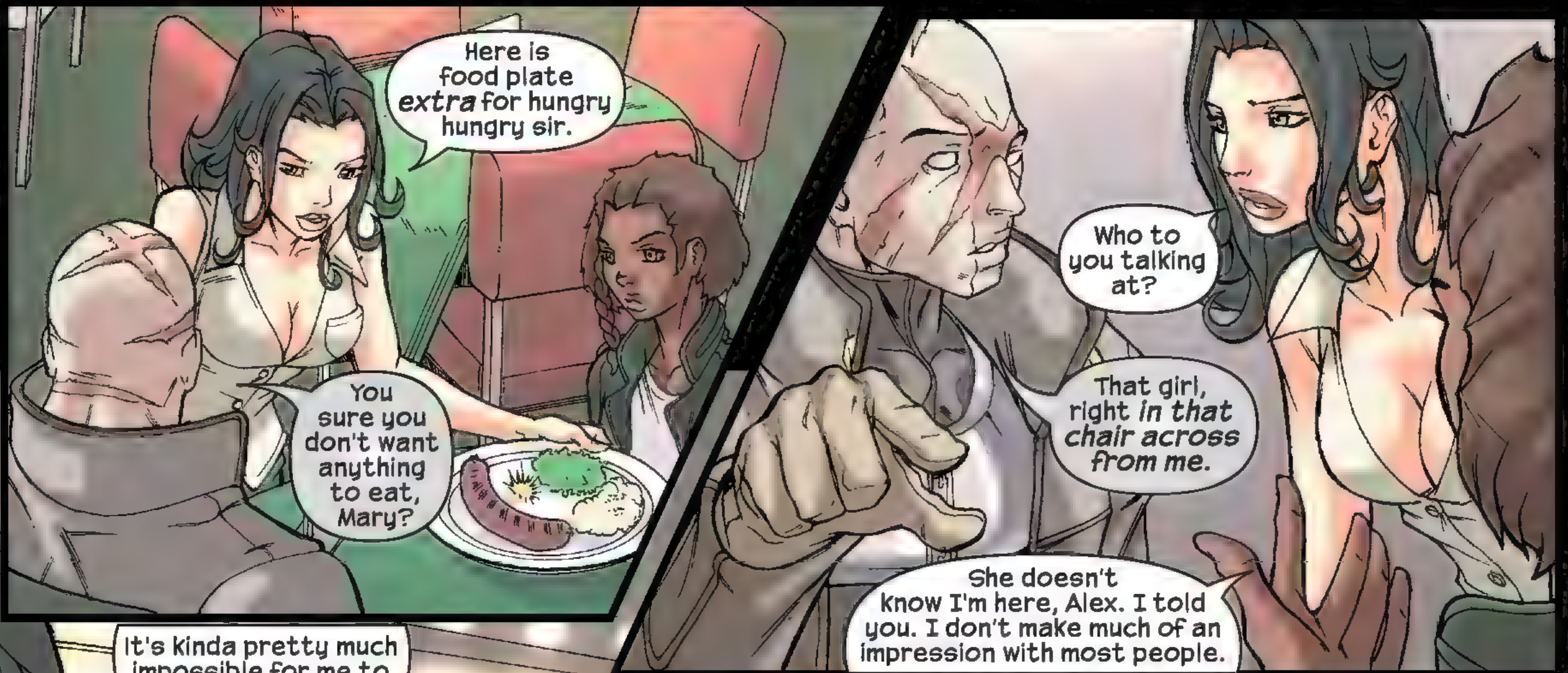
I like
to watch
you eat.

It's giving
me performance
anxiety.

...really *must*
try this kreplach
...I swear, it's like
sex on a plate.

Today's Special	
Wister Von Soup	12.99
Doom Burger	
Famtoche Pasta	
Streak Up Flaming	
The Thing Platter	
Nite-Nite & Mad Pie	

I'm all aware of
my *tongue* now.



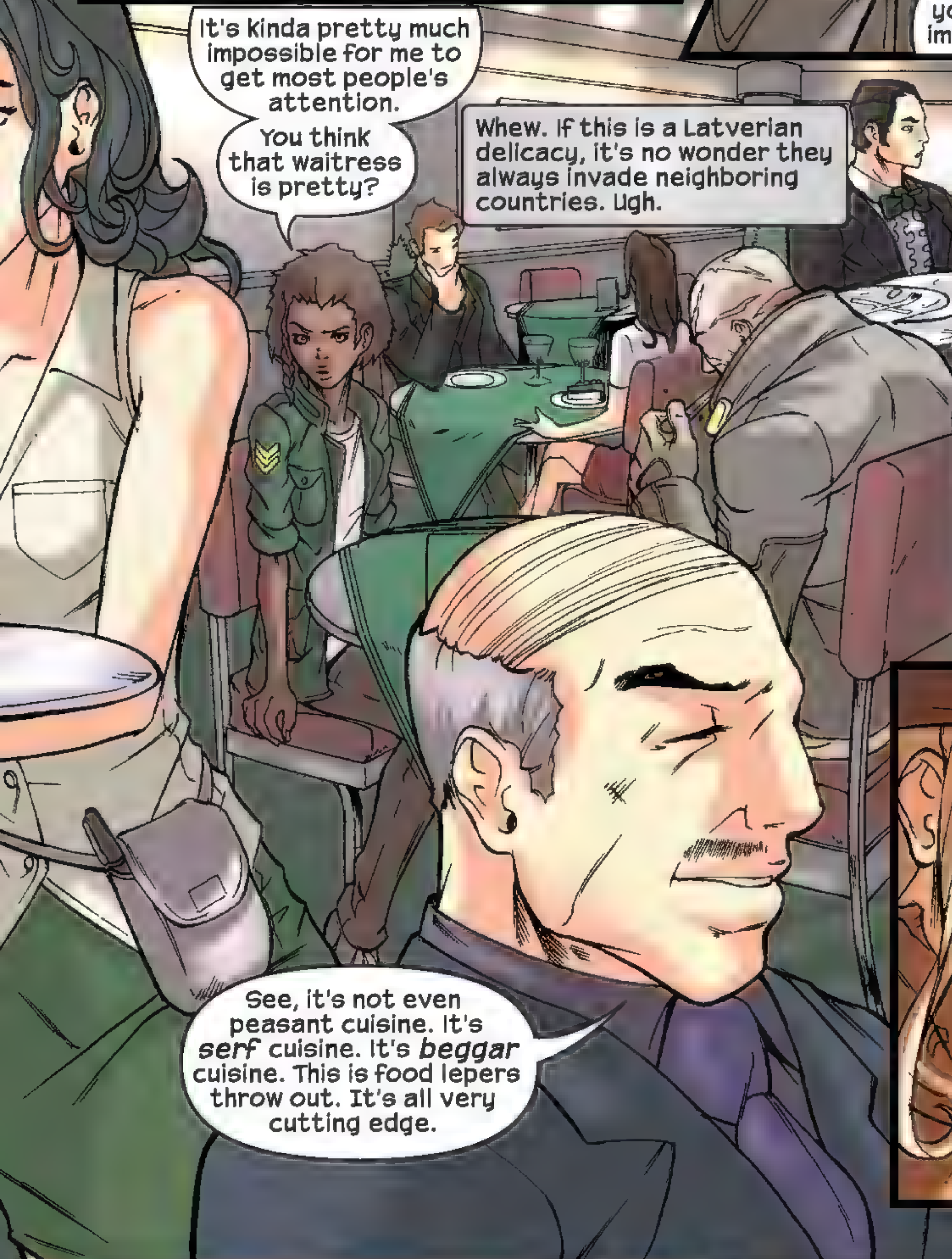
Here is food plate
extra for hungry
hungry sir.

You
sure you
don't want
anything
to eat,
Mary?

Who to
you talking
at?

That girl,
right in that
chair across
from me.

She doesn't
know I'm here, Alex. I told
you. I don't make much of an
impression with most people.



It's kinda pretty much
impossible for me to
get most people's
attention.

You think
that waitress
is pretty?

Whew. If this is a Latverian
delicacy, it's no wonder they
always invade neighboring
countries. Ugh.

See, it's not even
peasant cuisine. It's
serf cuisine. It's *beggar*
cuisine. This is food lepers
throw out. It's all very
cutting edge.



BRZZT
BRZZT

Agency X,
where your
problems
are our
paycheck...



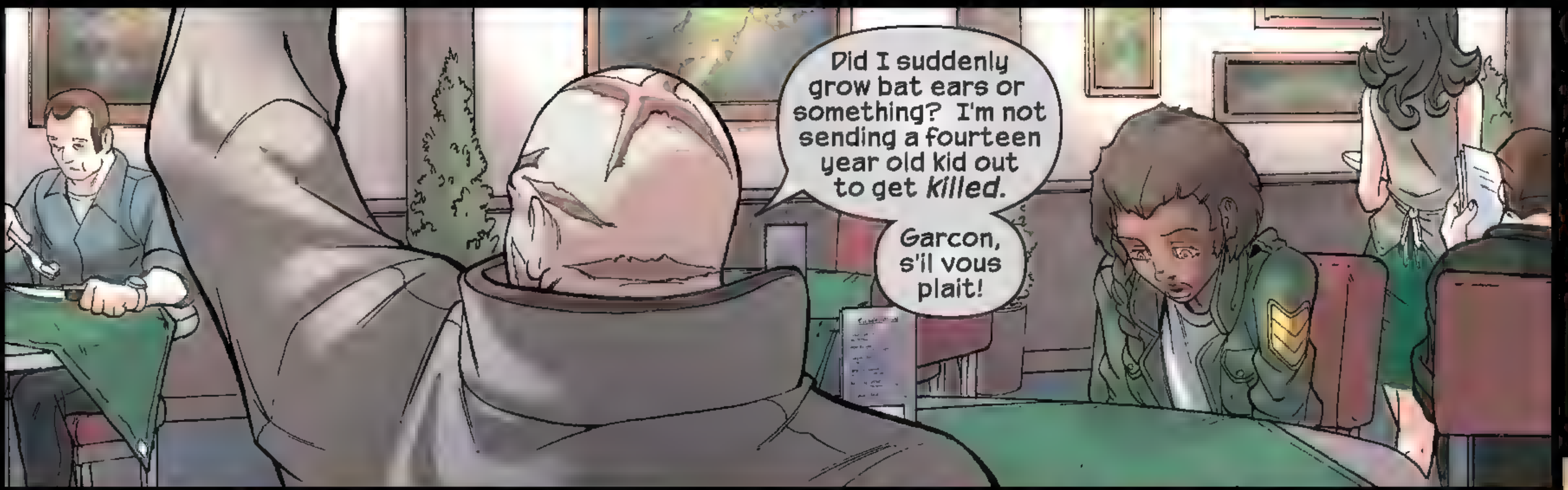
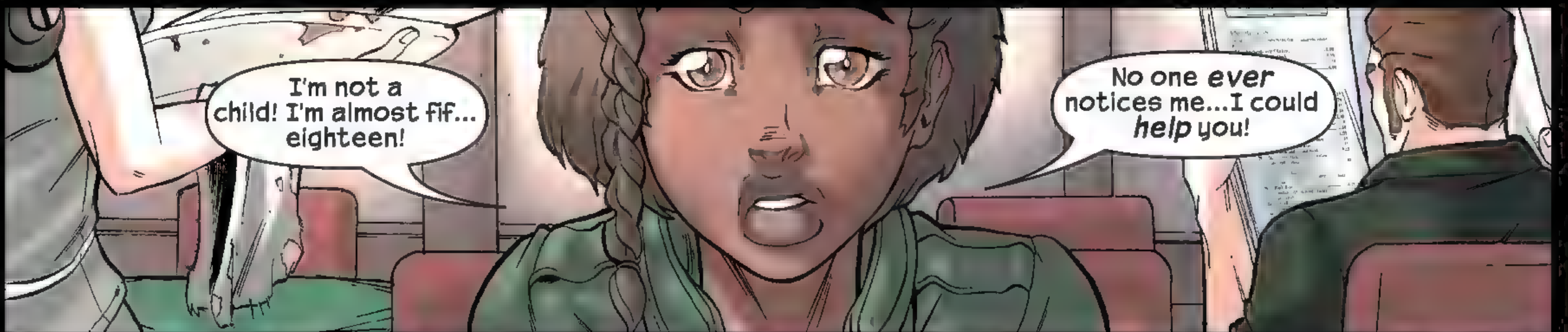
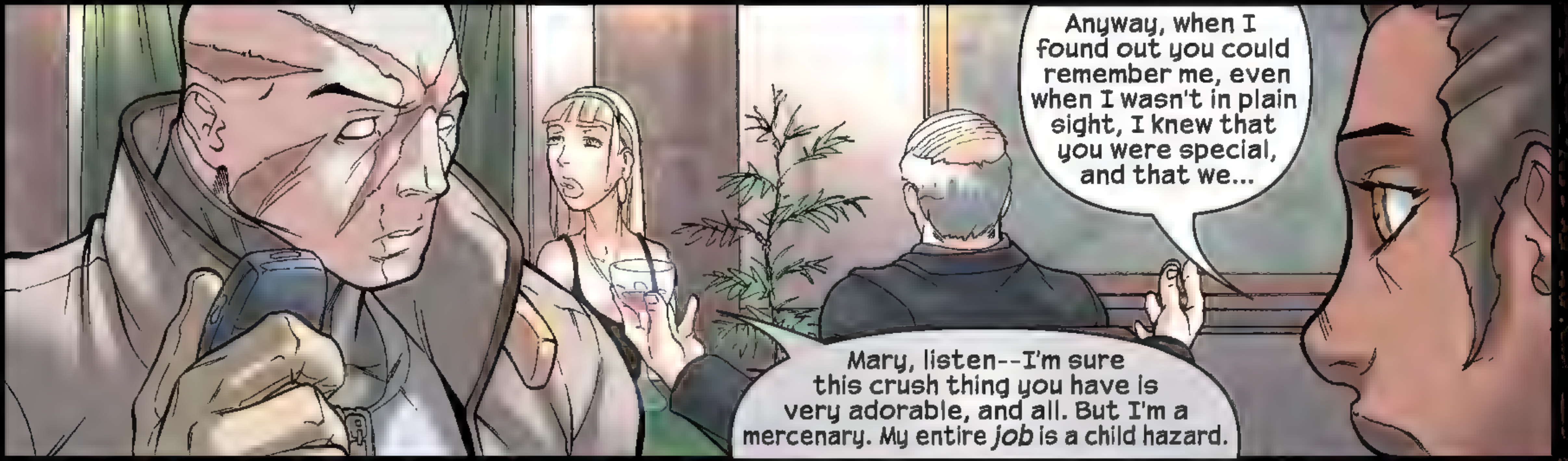
It's me, Alex.
Outlaw. Listen, the
client's happy as a
monkey in heat an'
cops got no idea
who caused all the
ruckus with the
hot dog cart.

No, I'm fine--just
bruised up. I'm turning
in an expense report for
my dress, though...

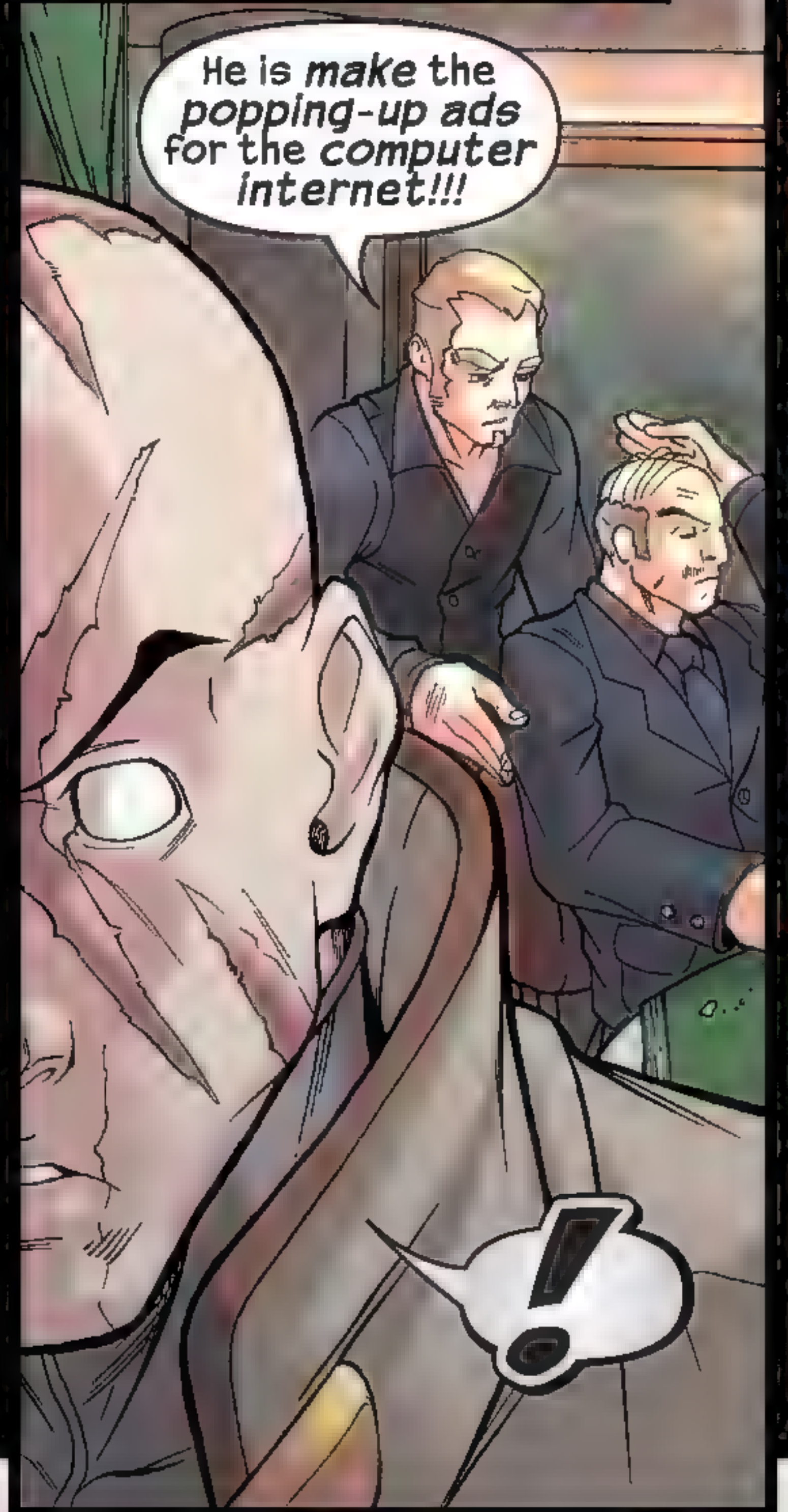
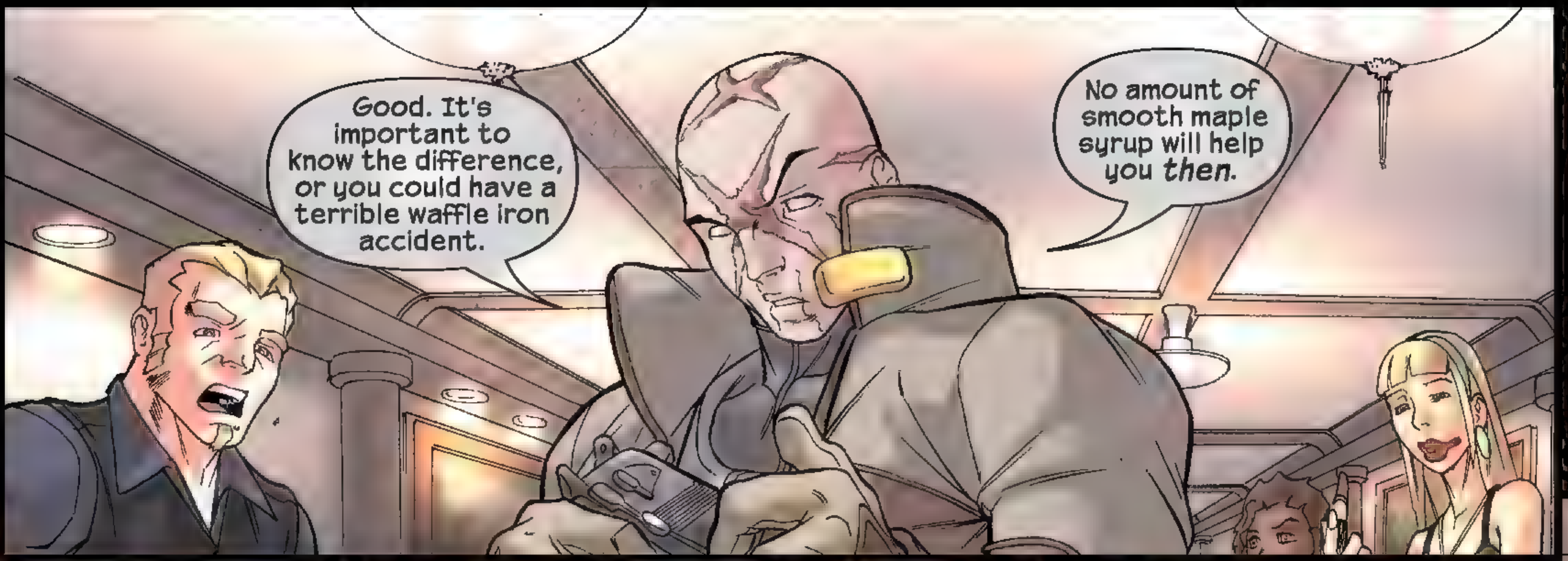


Nice work, partner. You collect the
check and I'll meet you back at
Sandi's, okay? I'll get a cab.

And this wine!
It's sex in a glass,
I kid you not.









I'm never eating there again. It's gauche. They had lobster in McNugget form!

Plus, the customers are flimsy and easily damaged.



What are you doing?



I was looking at your butt. It's awesome.

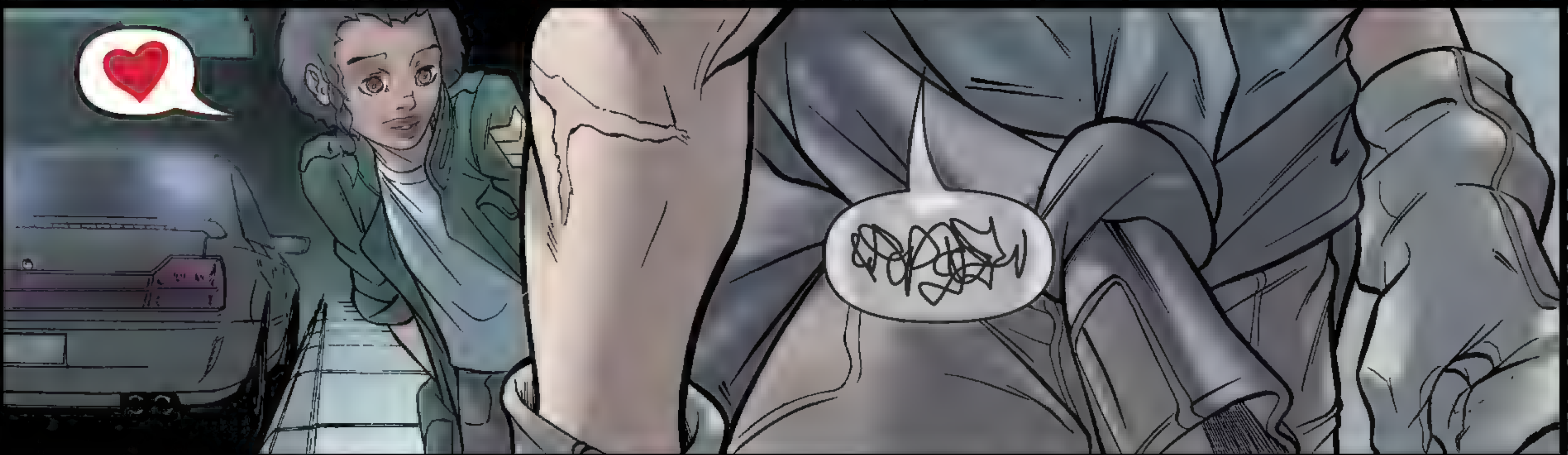


Stop it. I'm not even sure that's legal.

It's party pie.



It's vicious 'licious.



scribble



And it doesn't bother you that I think you're nuts?

It's nice to have someone think I'm something.



Bzzzt!
Bzzzt!

Hello, Agency X, where, for a fee, we can EXyour EX...



Hello again, Mr. Hayden.

Higashi.



I'm very sorry it's come to this, Mr. Hayden. Our positions in our fields are remarkably similar. But I'm afraid you've left me no option.

I have a man with me. He's an expert in all things incendiary. A specialist, if you will.



Do you know where we are, Mr. Hayden?



"I'm at the very center of your beloved park."

Damn!
Damn!
Damn!

Wait!
Wait for me!



He's gonna burn it. To the ground.

Outlaw's got the car
...Oh, man.

RIGHT TURN SIGNAL



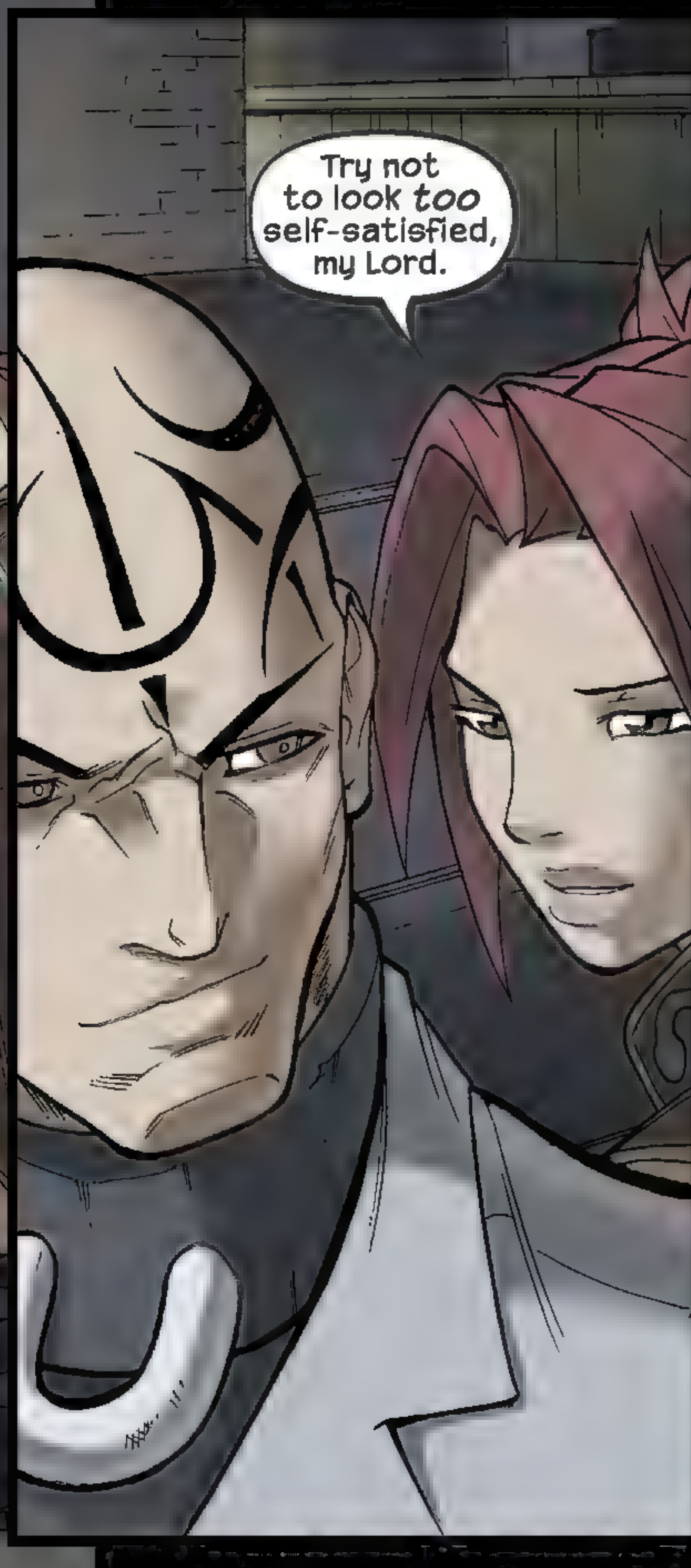
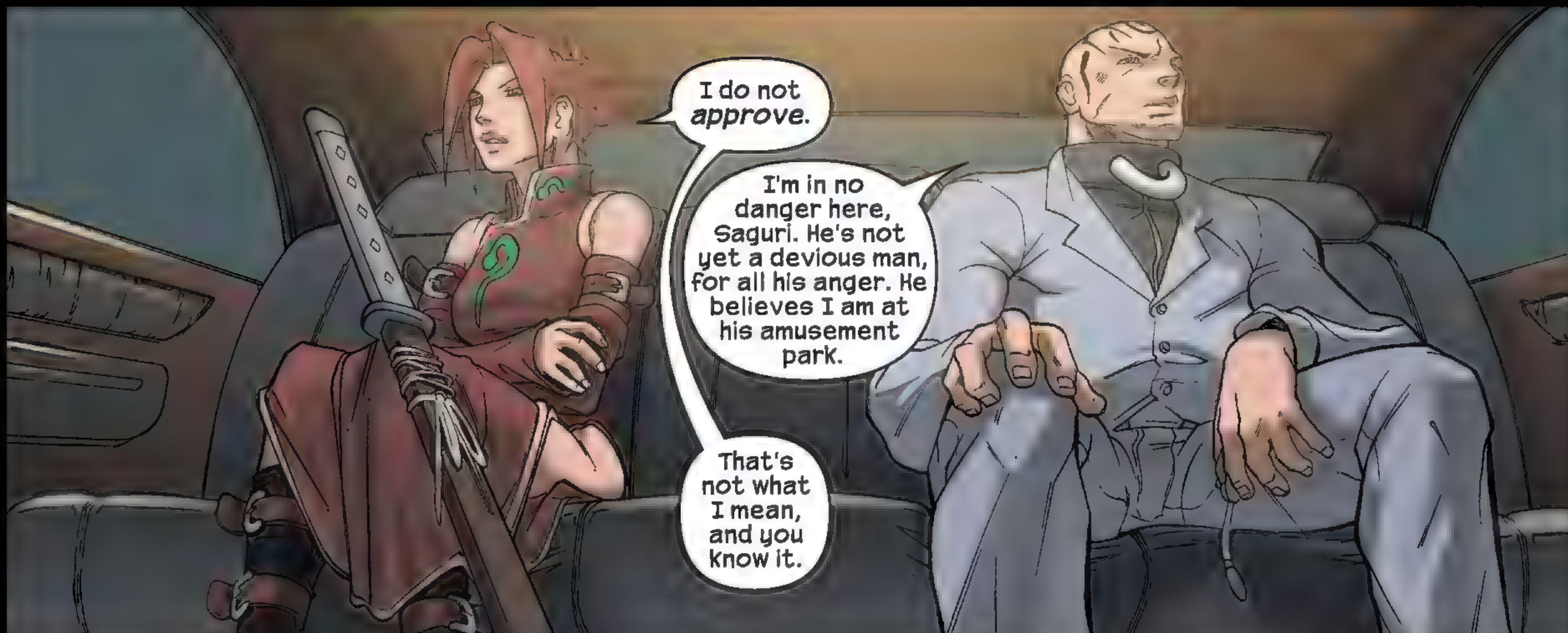
Who's gonna burn what? Where are we going?

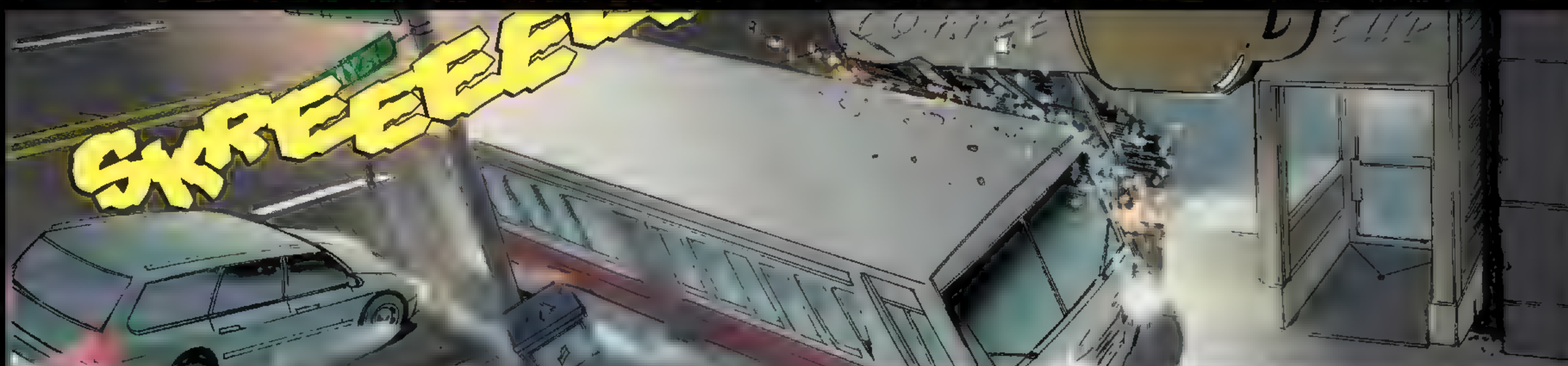
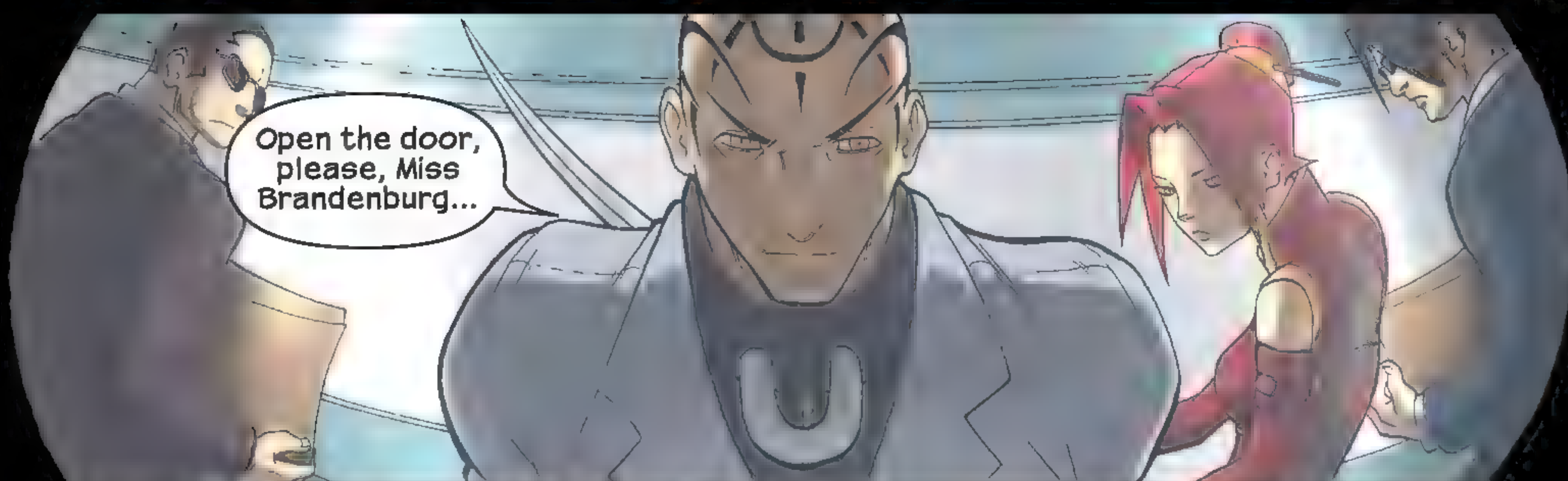
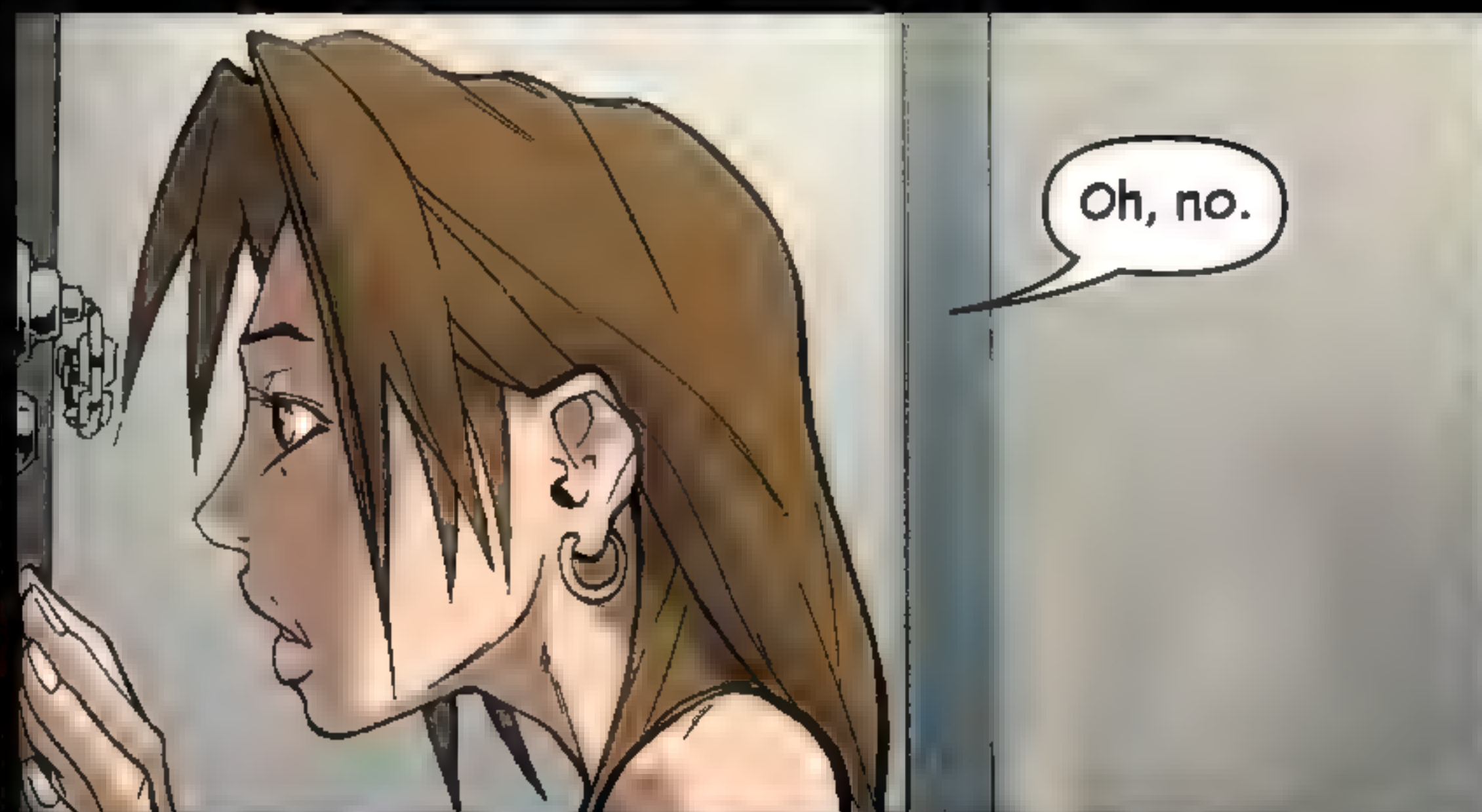
Get outta that seat, Ace.

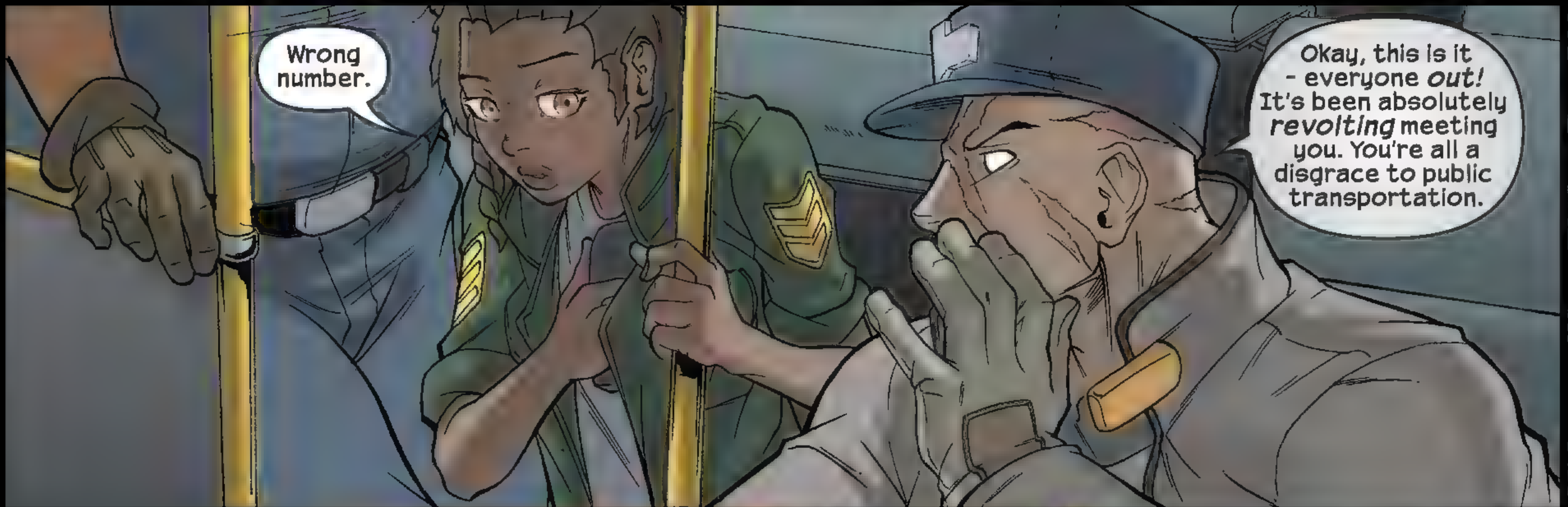


What, did you think I was gonna steal the Volkswagen?

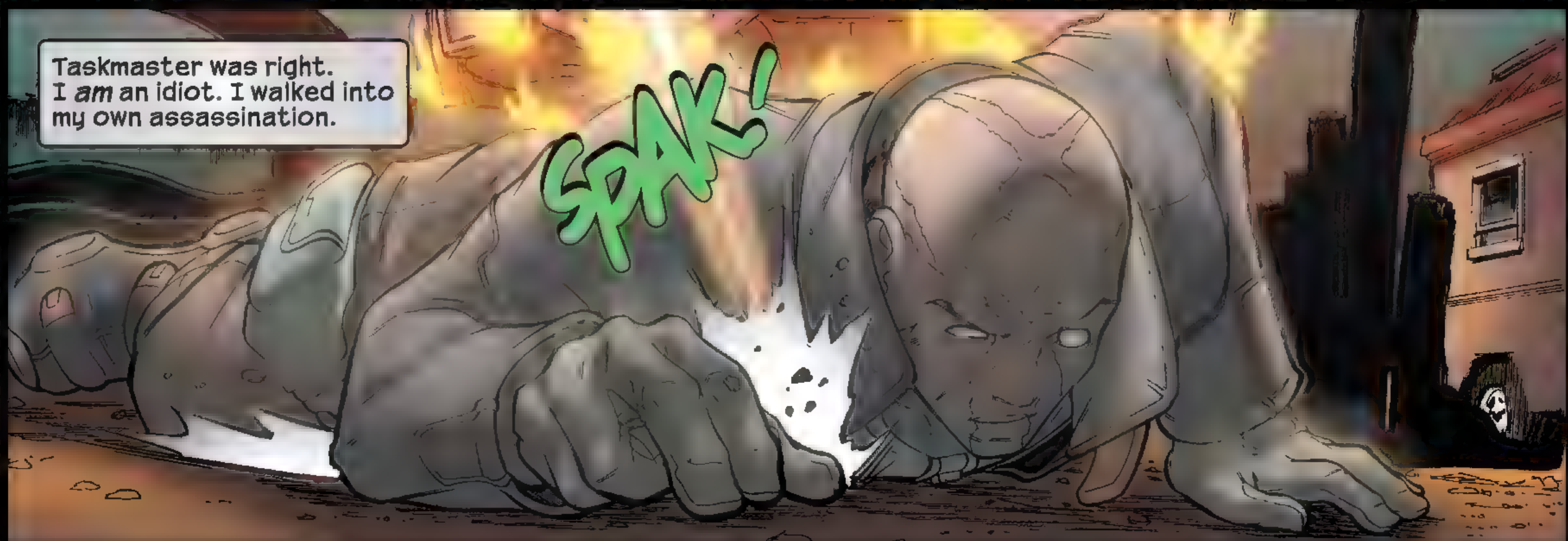


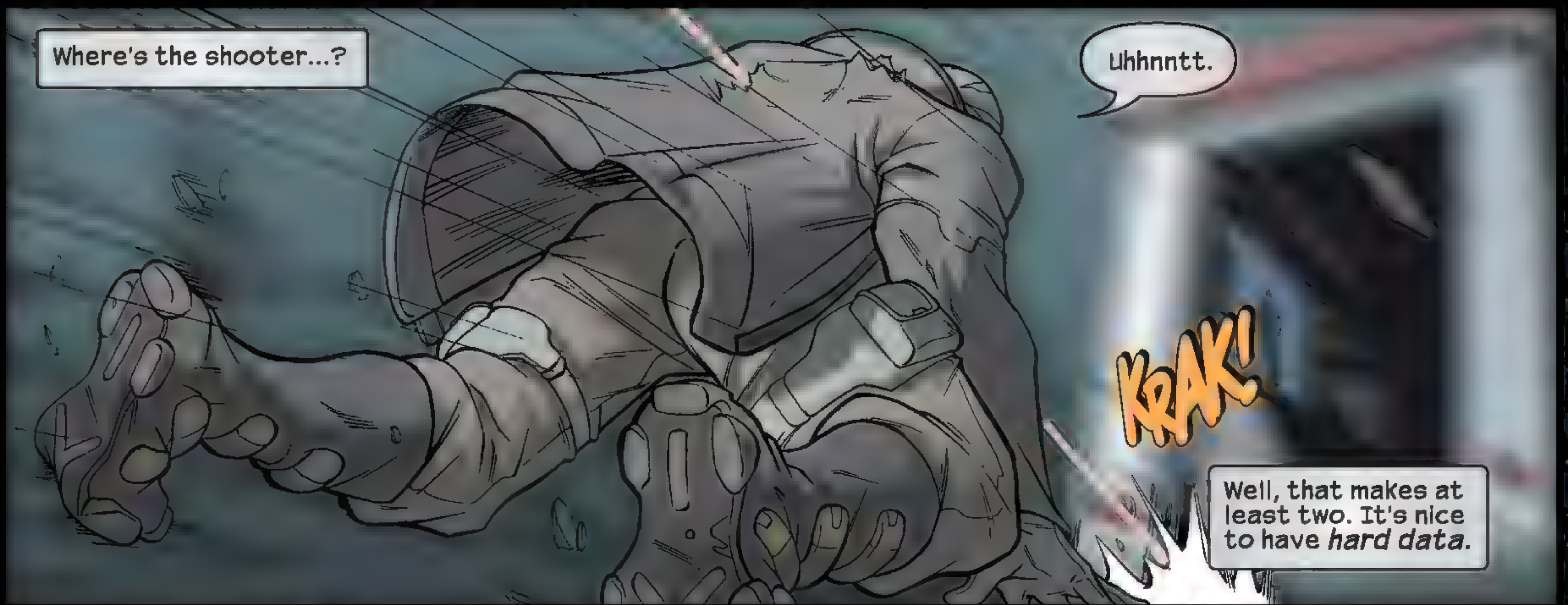










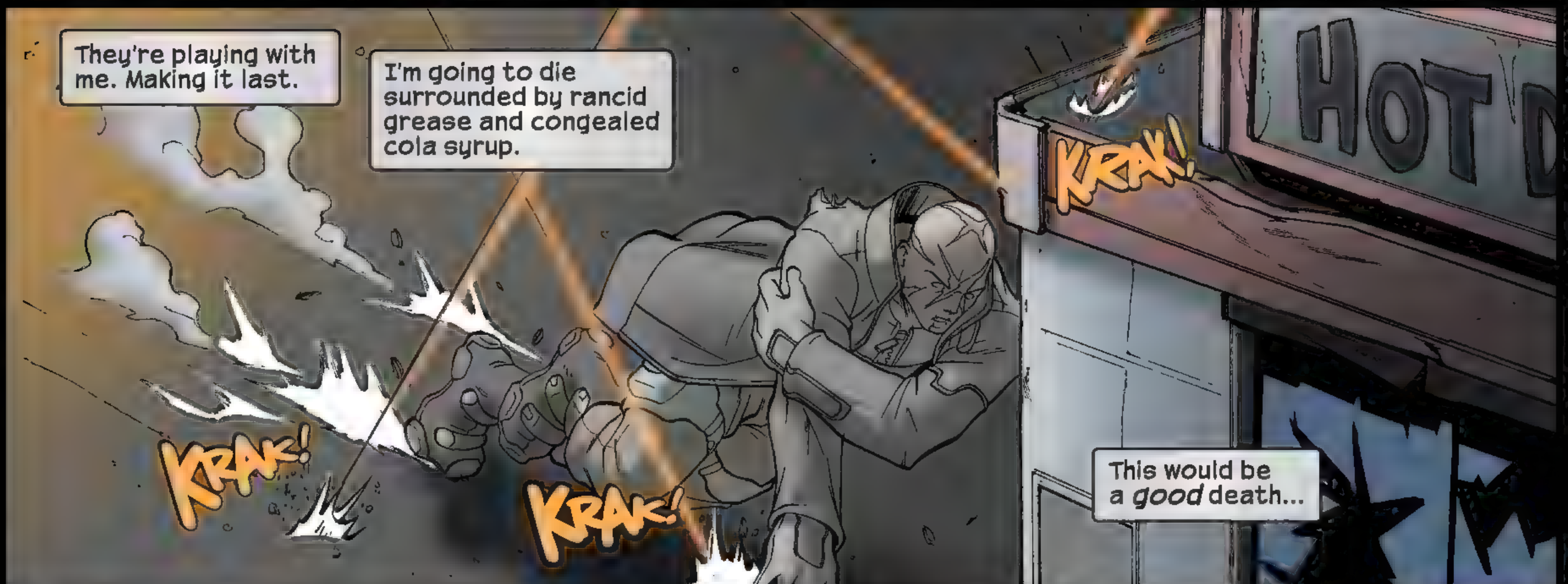


Where's the shooter...?

Uhhnnntt.

KRAK!

Well, that makes at least two. It's nice to have *hard data*.



They're playing with me. Making it last.

I'm going to die surrounded by rancid grease and congealed cola syrup.

KRAK!

KRAK!

KRAK!

This would be a *good death*...



One of 'em has altitude.

That *kid*'s still got the phone. Can't call for *backup*.

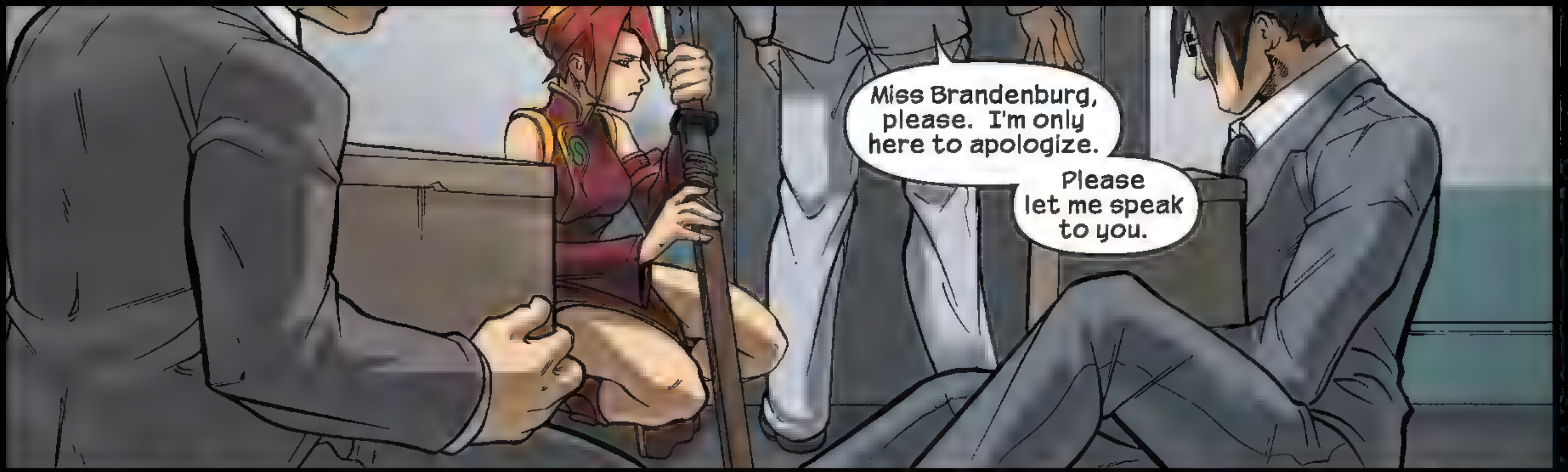
KRAK!



All right. Here's the deal.

I'll surrender, but you have to let the *corndogs* go free!

The *corndogs* never hurt nobody!



Miss Brandenburg, please. I'm only here to apologize.

Please let me speak to you.

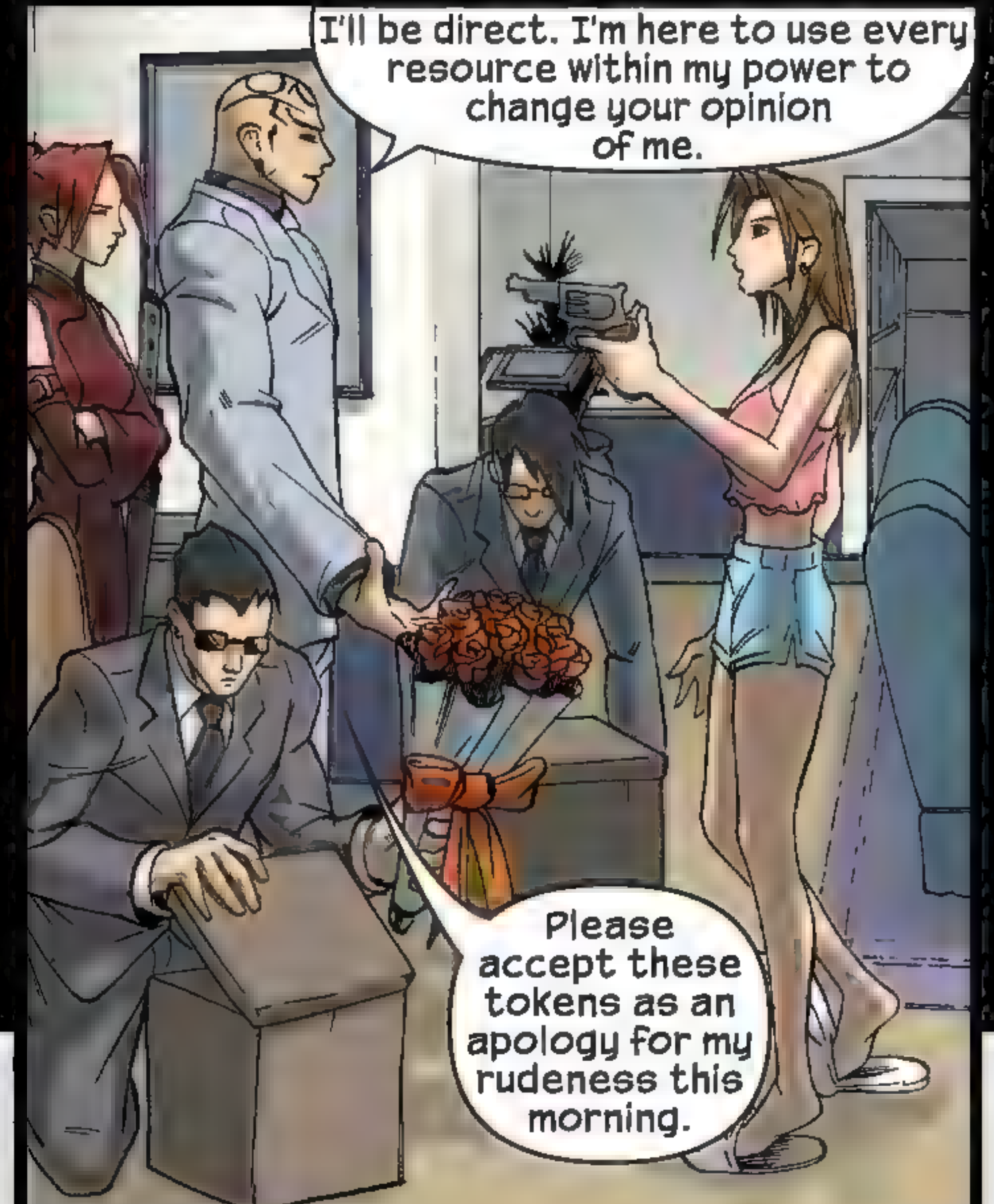


I have a gun. I'll shoot you.



That is a risk I find delightful, Miss.

May I come in? I've brought some things to show my esteem.



I'll be direct. I'm here to use every resource within my power to change your opinion of me.

Please accept these tokens as an apology for my rudeness this morning.



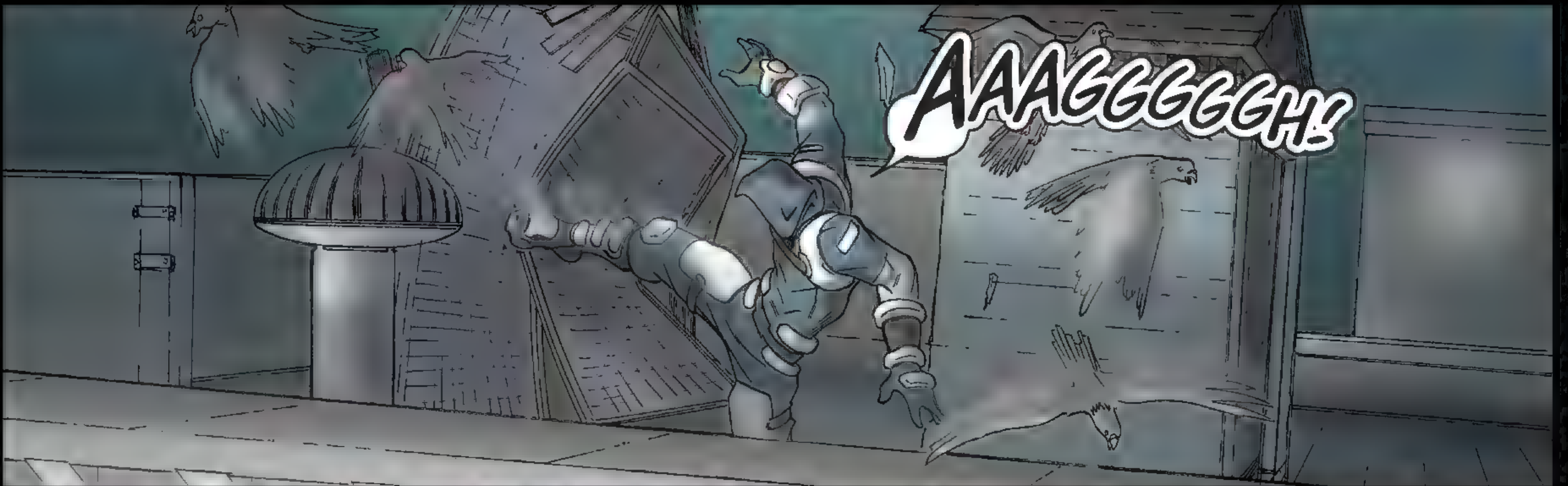
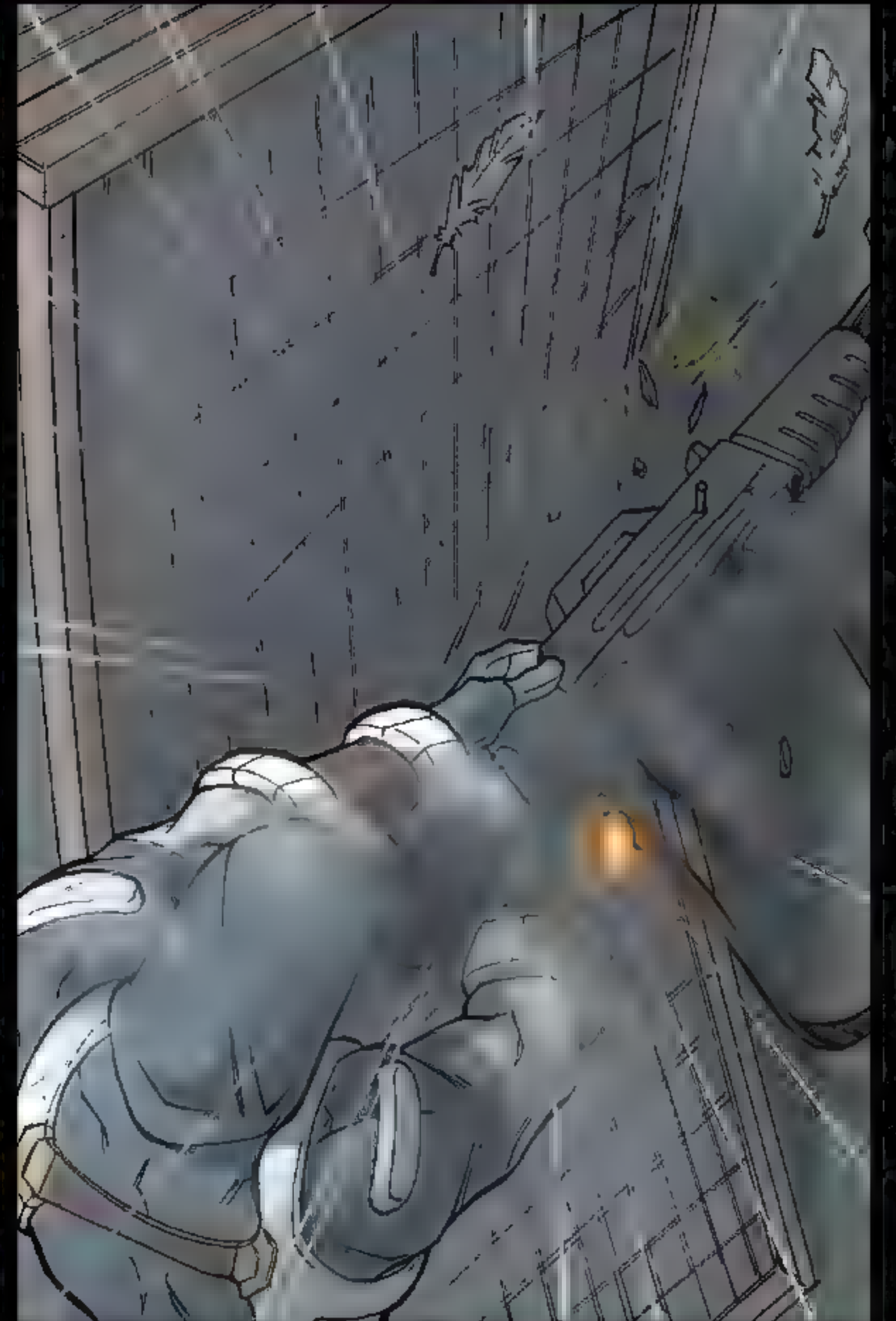
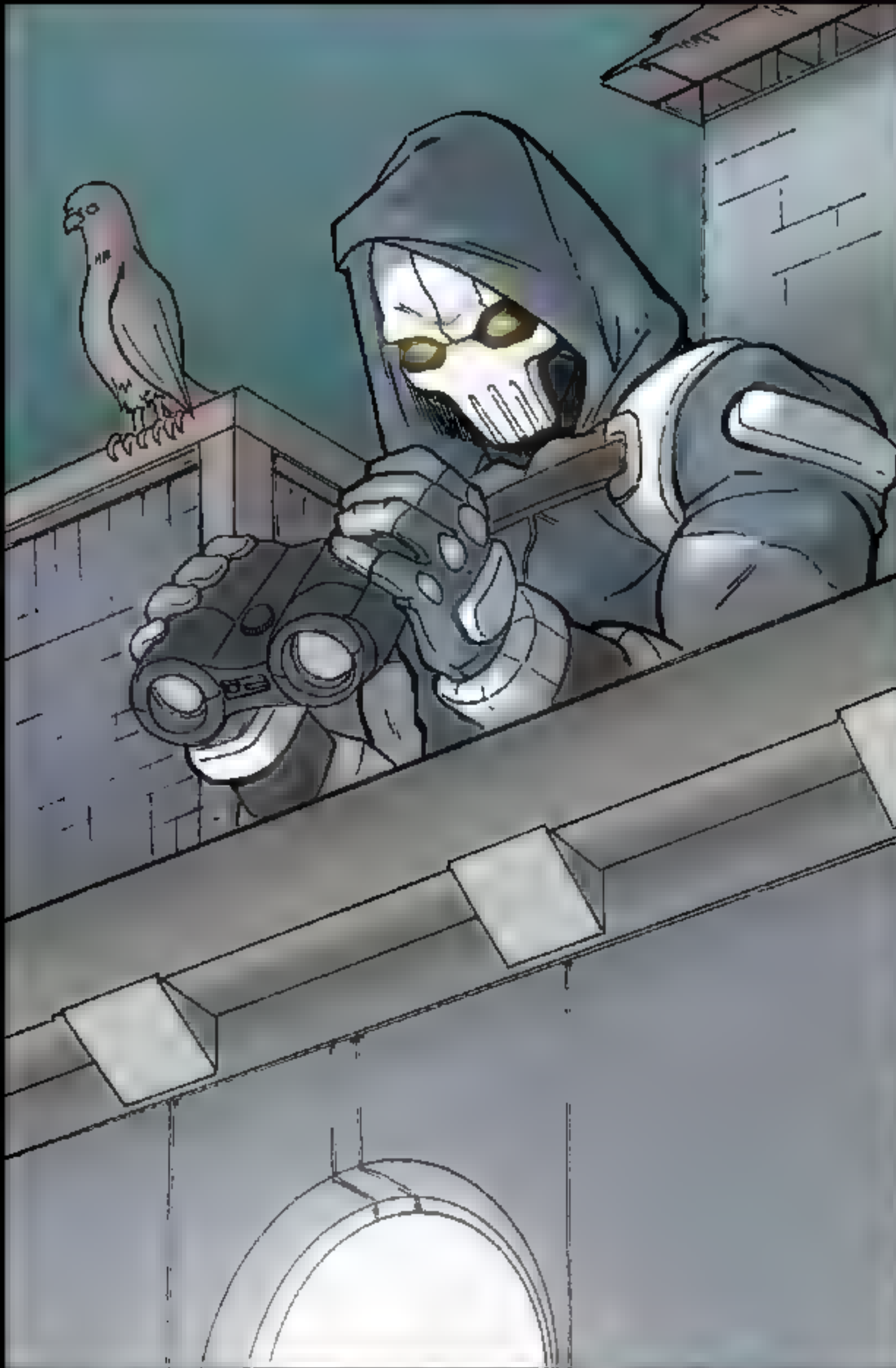
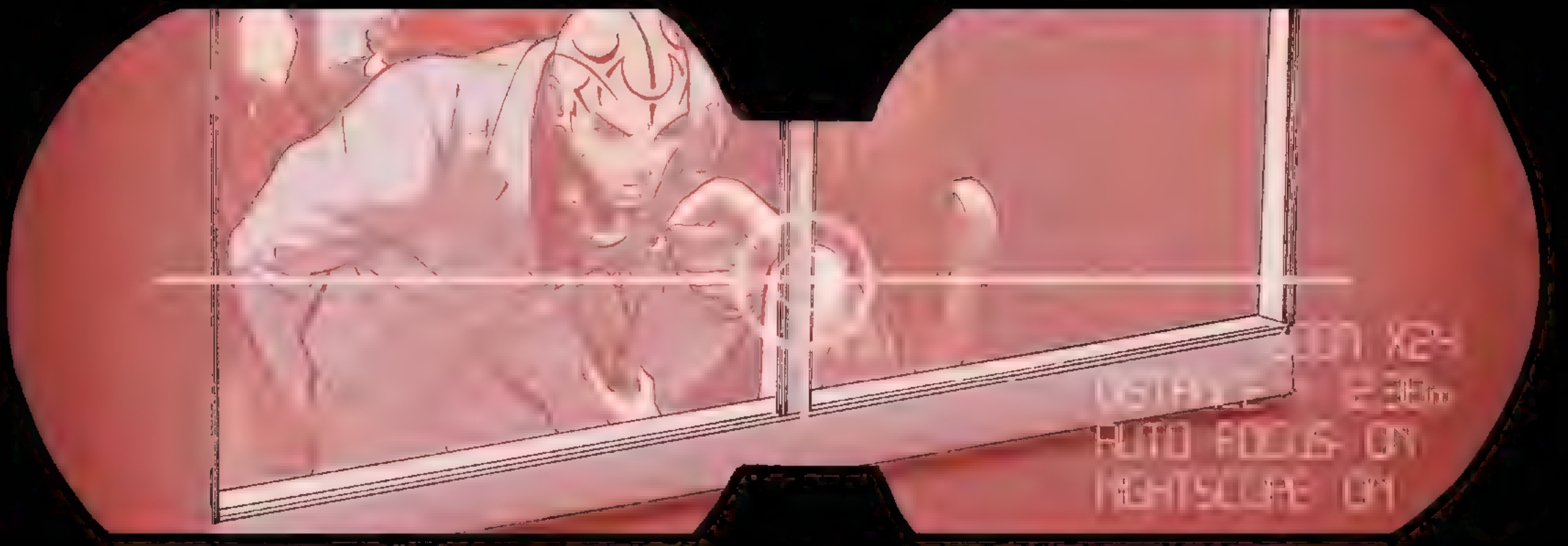
'Rudeness'? You were going to kill my friends.

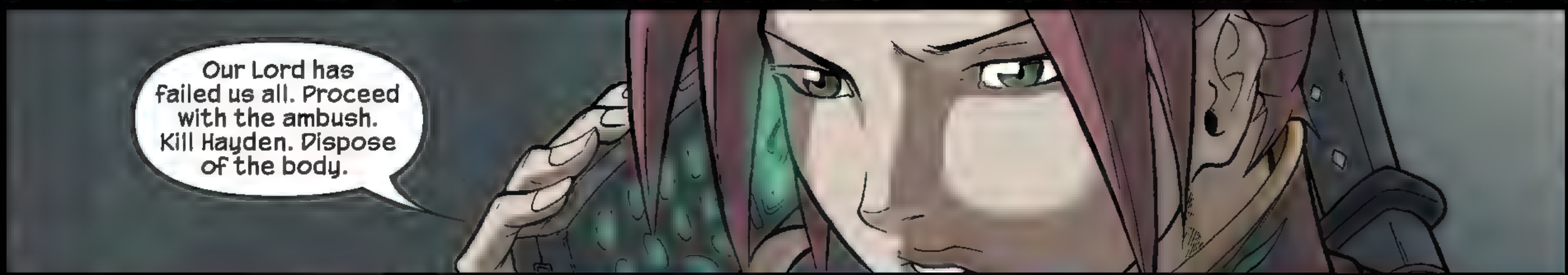
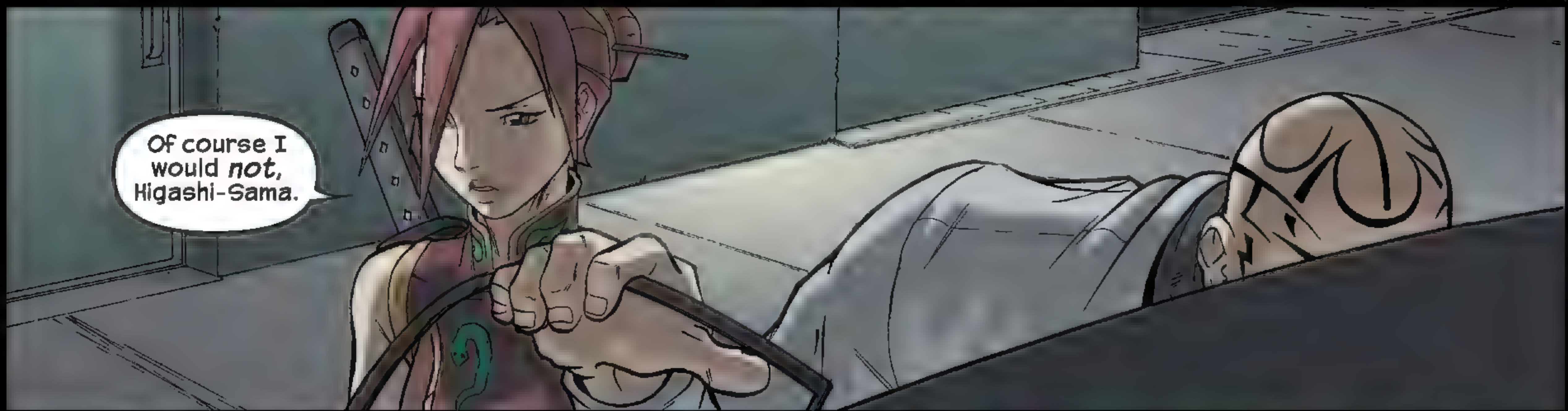
Miss Brandenburg, since the moment I first saw you, I've thought of nothing else.

Would you do me the very great honor of allowing me to visit you socially?



Are you... Are you asking me on a date?







CLICK



AAAAH!



Nice place
for a sniper's nest.
Right by the access
ladder.

We're going
to test your
loyalty. Hear
that rumble?



"I started the coaster's
auto run. These are illegal
now, I gather."

"Far too
dangerous."



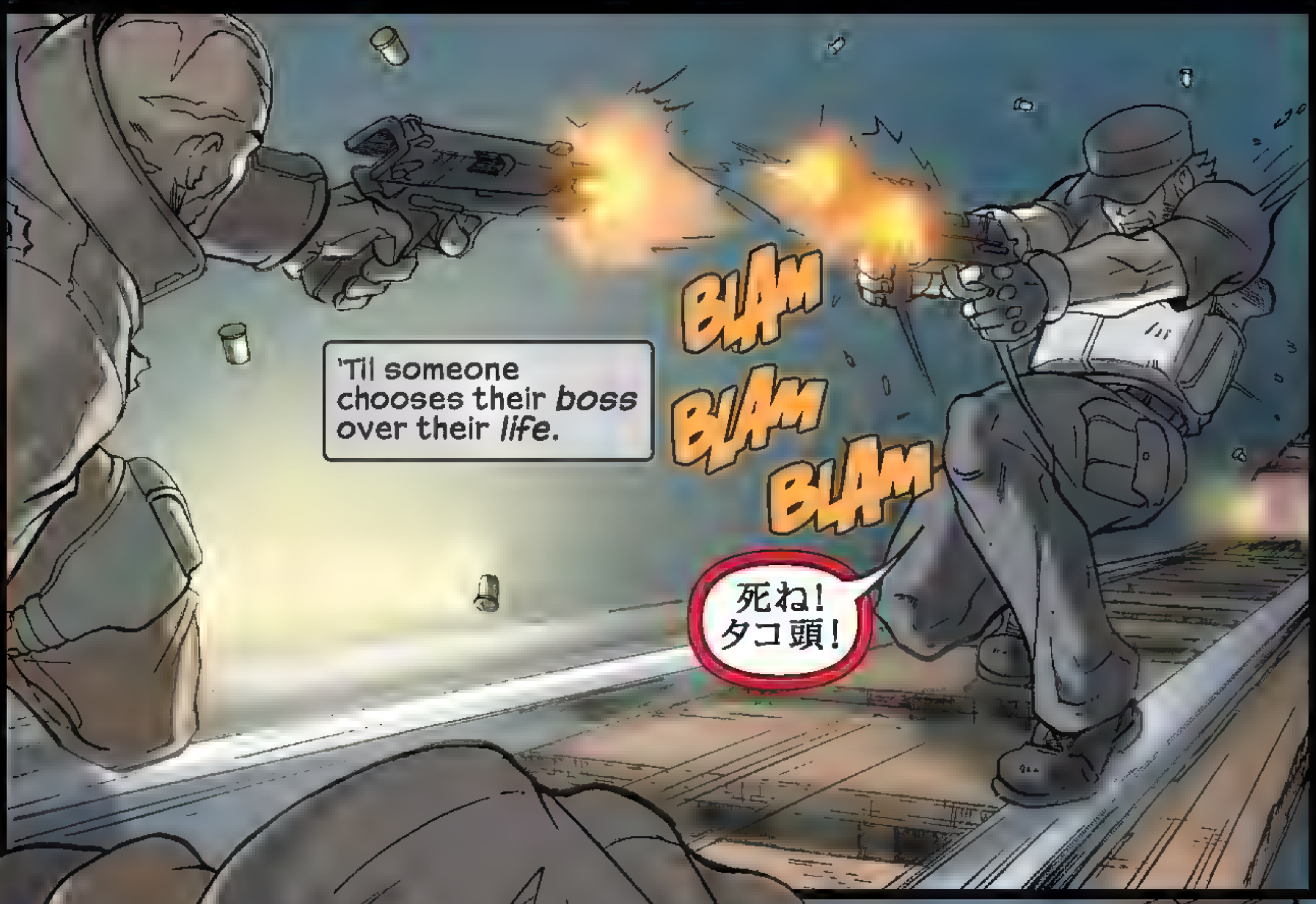
So, you can make
for the ladder now, and
live, or we can shoot it out,
and if you win, you get hit by
the coaster train running
fifty miles an hour six
stories up.

Happiest
place on Earth, man.
S'up to you.



Loyalty's a funny thing.

You never know who's got it and who doesn't.



'Til someone chooses their boss over their life.

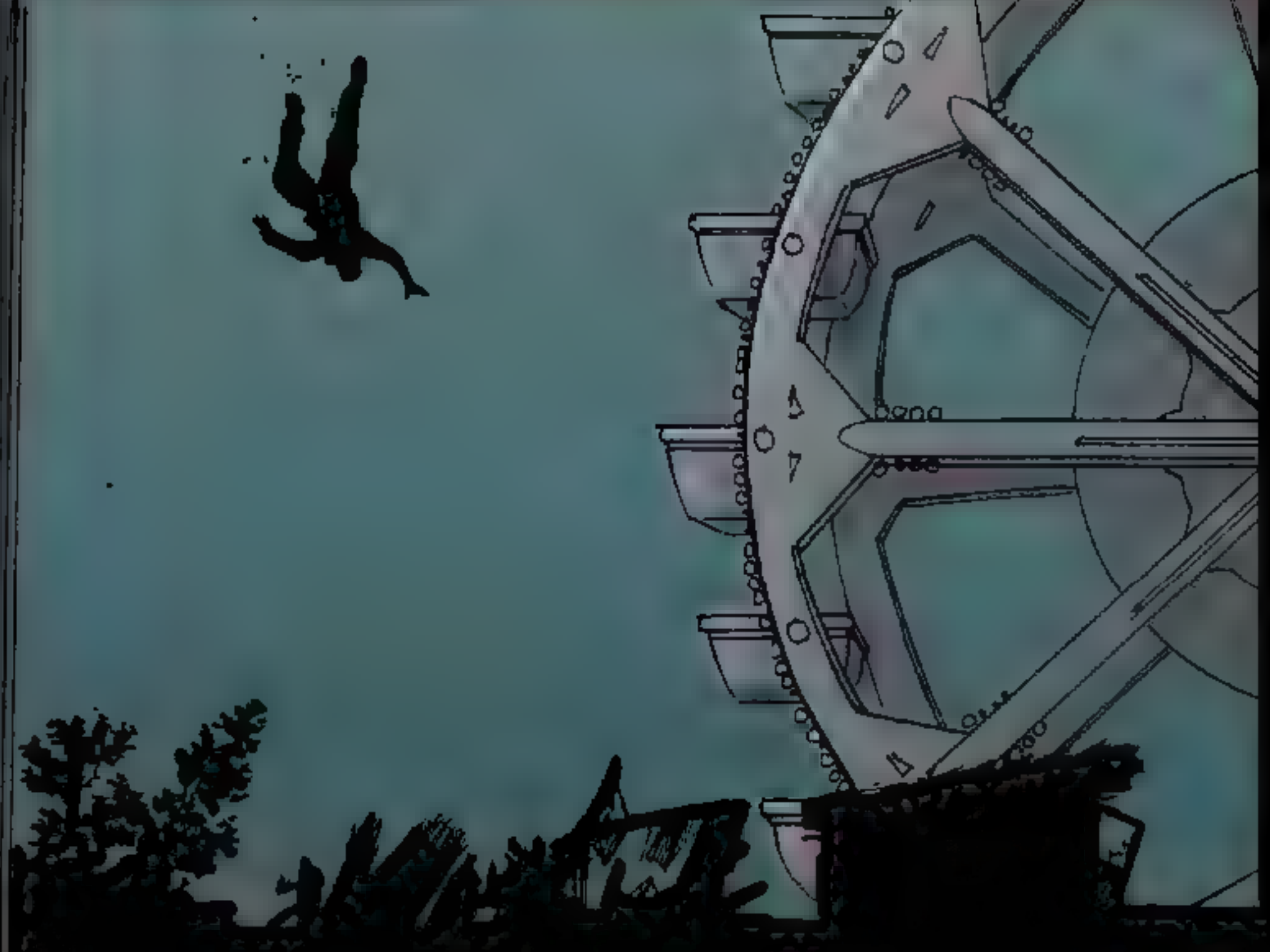
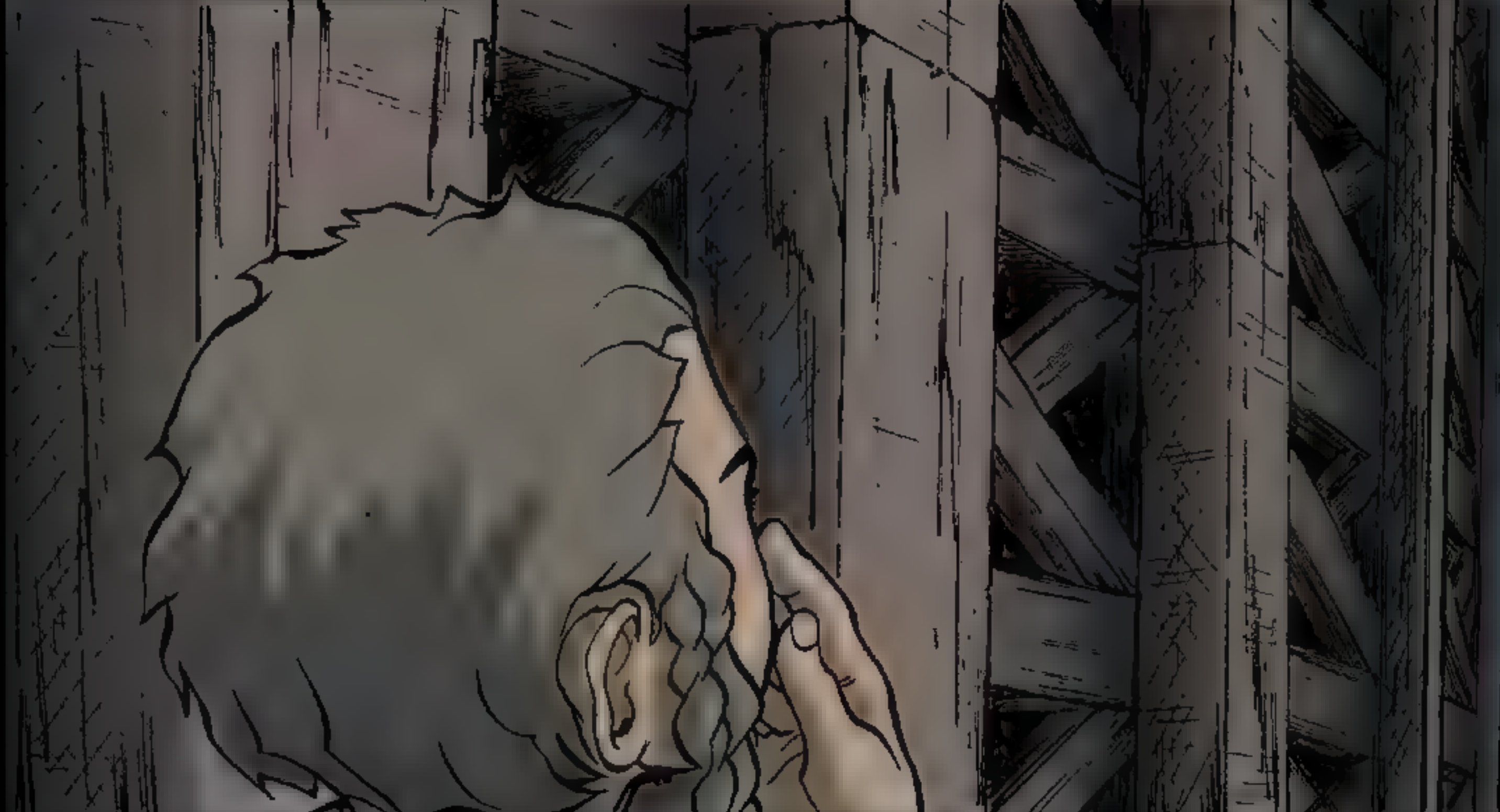
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

死ね!
タコ頭!



WHAAAMMM!

You should have chosen to frolic.





Alex! I thought that was *you*!

Well, now *this* is interesting.

Huucc... hrrrrkk.



What's wrong? Why are you making that noise?

hrrlkk.

I thought there was almost *no limit* to my healing ability.



Alex?

Guess a bullet lodged in the *trachea* cancels *all bets*.

Guess even a freak like *me*...

awuhhhh. wuhhhhh.



Needs to get... oxygen...to... the...bra...

Alex!



No. Oh, please. No.

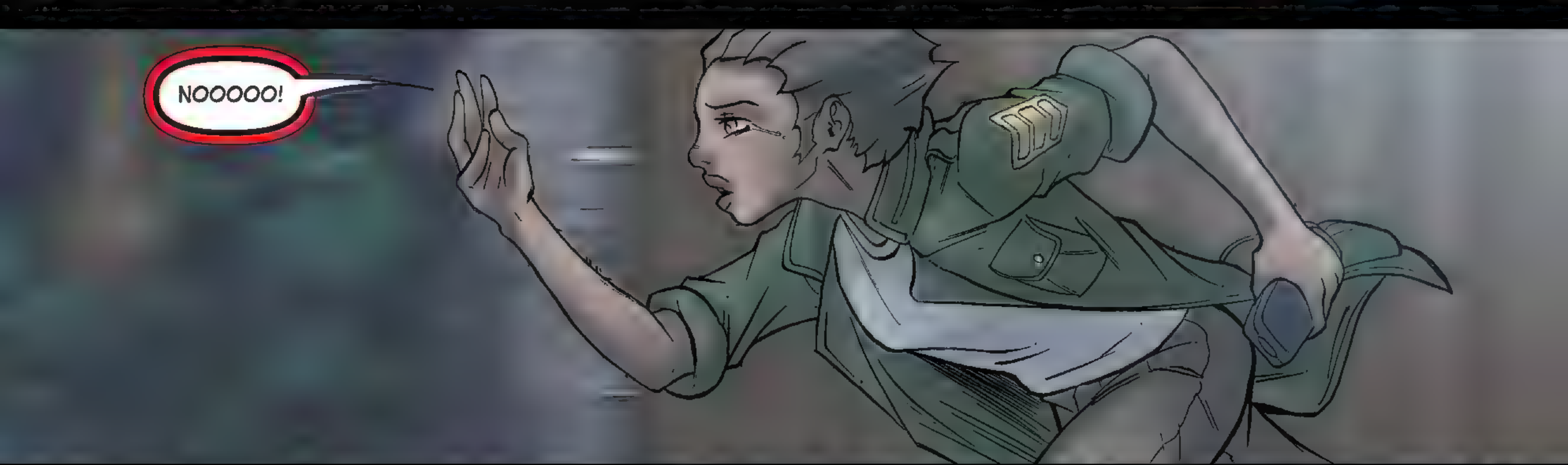


Please, please send an ambulance *right away* to Alpi...

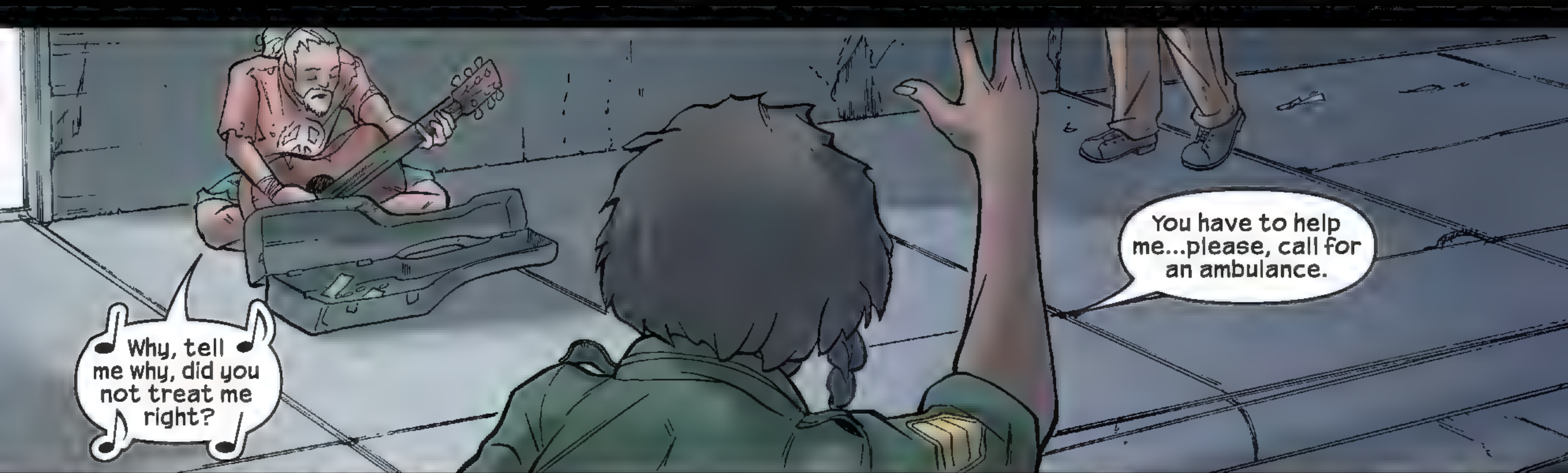
911 Operator. Hello? Hello?

He's *dying*! Send an *ambu...*

Is anyone there? Hello?



NOOOOOO!



Why, tell me why, did you not treat me right?

You have to help me...please, call for an ambulance.



He can't breathe. He's not breathing!



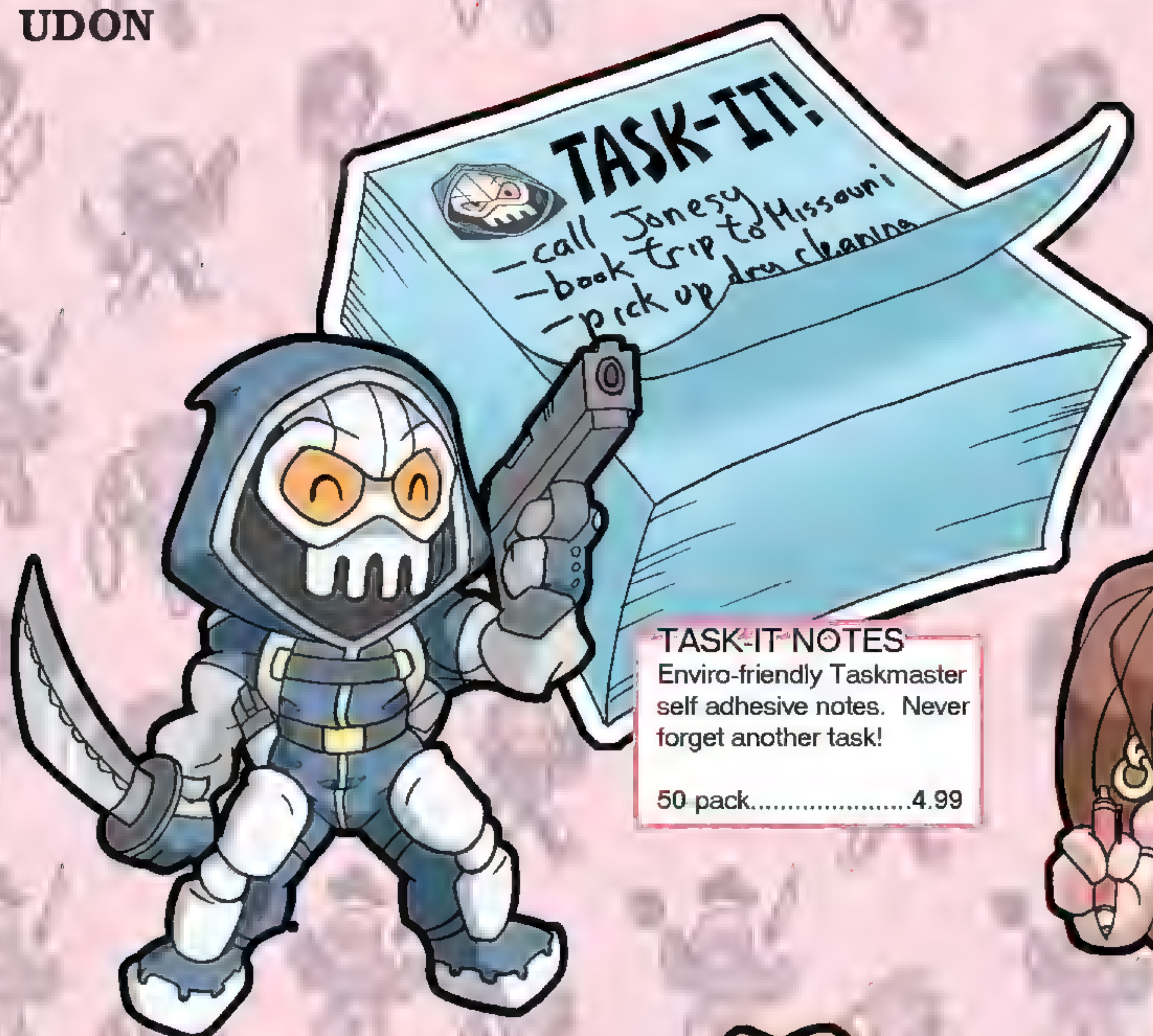
Please. Please.

Help me. Anyone.

**TO BE
CONTINUED!**

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Stationary and Supplies 2002 CATALOG



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Enviro-friendly Taskmaster self adhesive notes. Never forget another task!

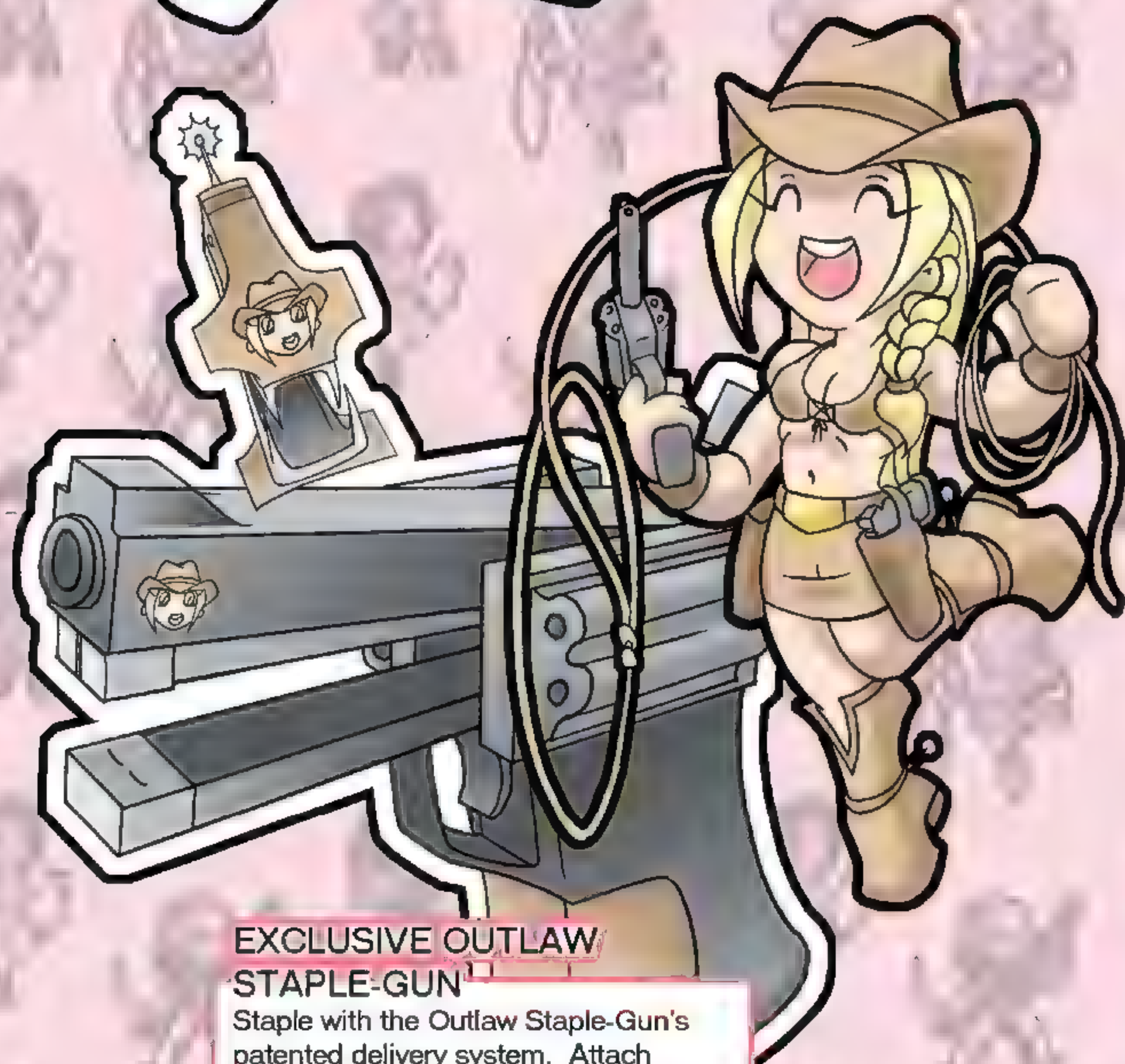
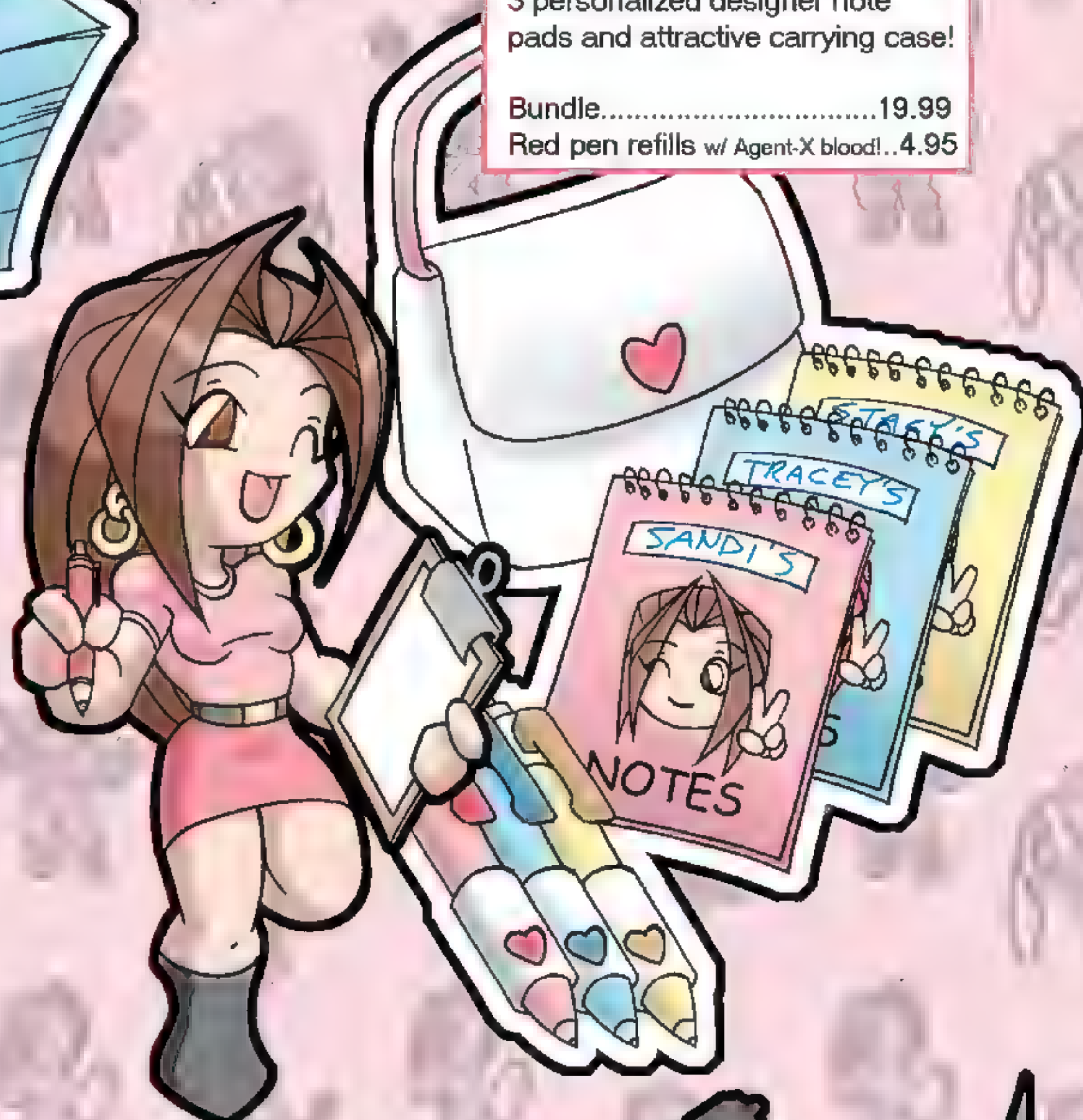
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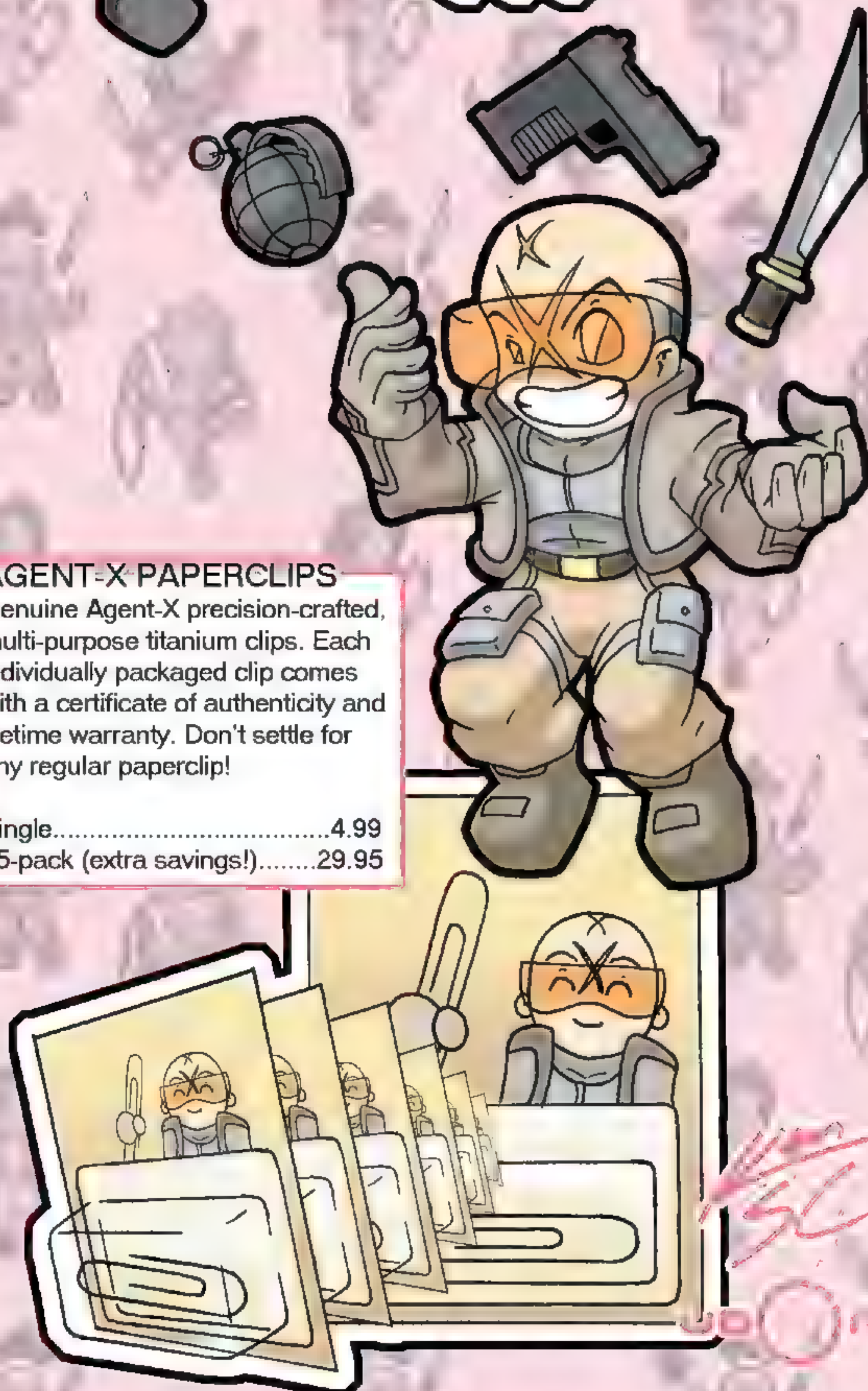
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TO MOST, THE LETTER X STANDS FOR AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY. THE UNDERWORLD IS NO EXCEPTION. FOR PEOPLE WITH EVIL INTENT, IT STANDS FOR ALEX HAYDEN, THE HIRED GUN WITH NO PAST AND A BURNING DESIRE TO TAKE HIS POSITION AS THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST, AND HIGHEST PAID MERCENARY.

STAN LEE PRESENTS

AGENT X

WRITER GAIL SIMONE ART AND COLOR UDON WITH ALVIN LEE, ROB ROSS, ERIC VEDDER, THEREALT!, SHANE LAW, & CALVIN LO UDON CHIEF ERIC KO
LETTERS CORY PETIT ASSISTANT EDITOR LYNNE YOSHII
EDITOR ANDREW LIS EDITOR IN CHIEF JOE QUESADA PRESIDENT BILL JEMAS

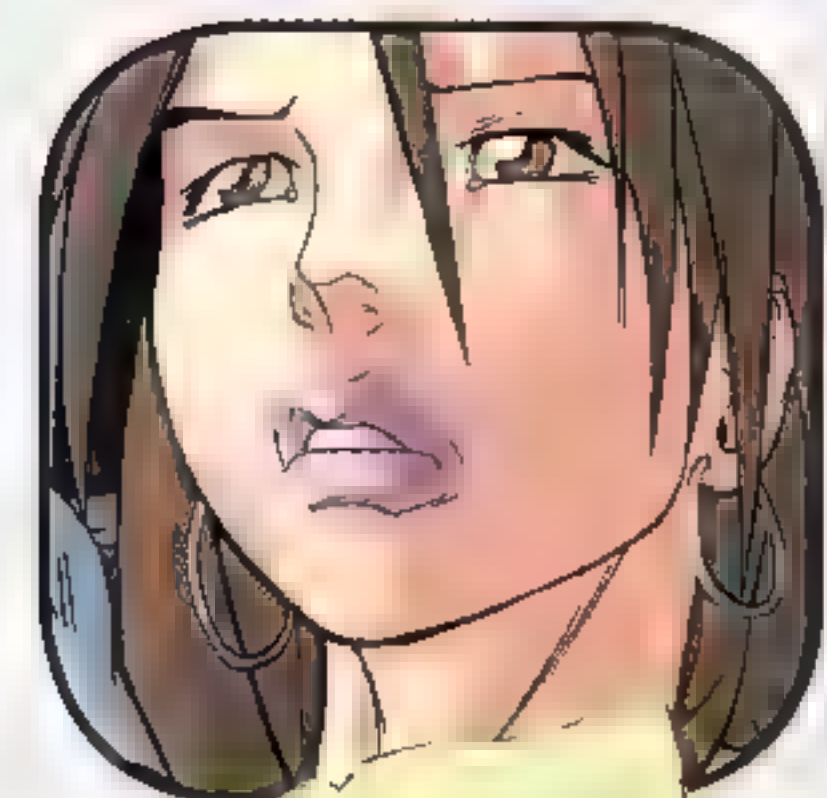
DEAD MAN'S SWITCH PART FIVE OF SIX: A LITTLE CRAZY



ALEX



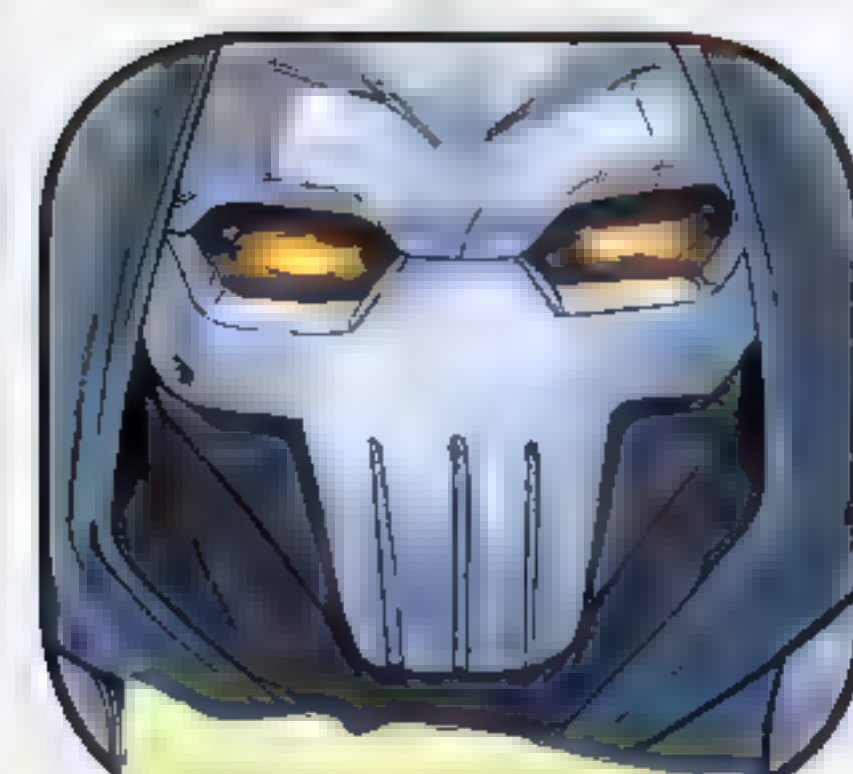
HIGASHI



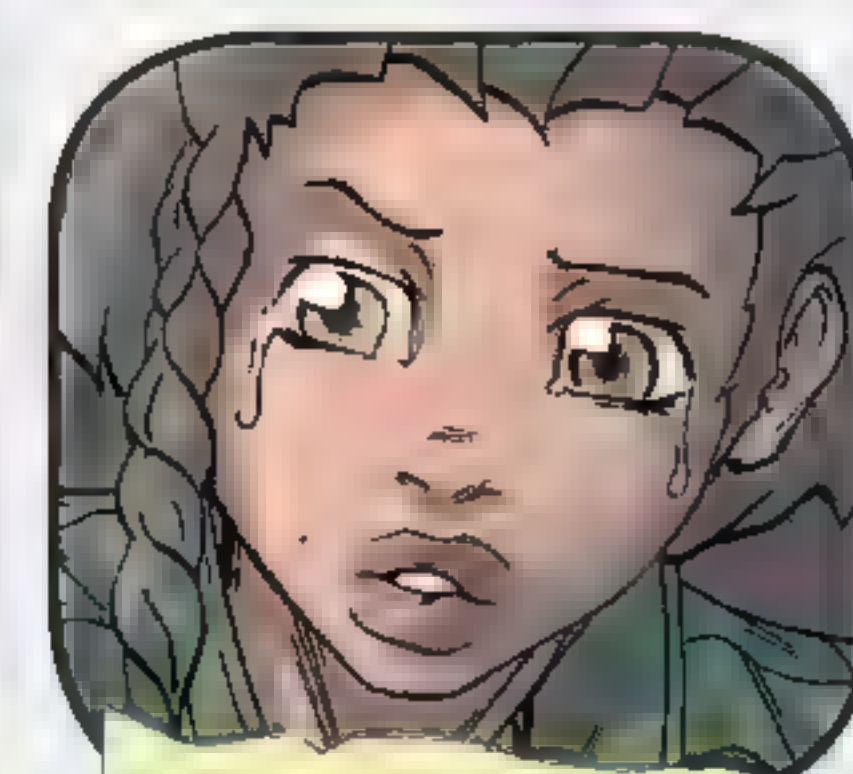
SANDI



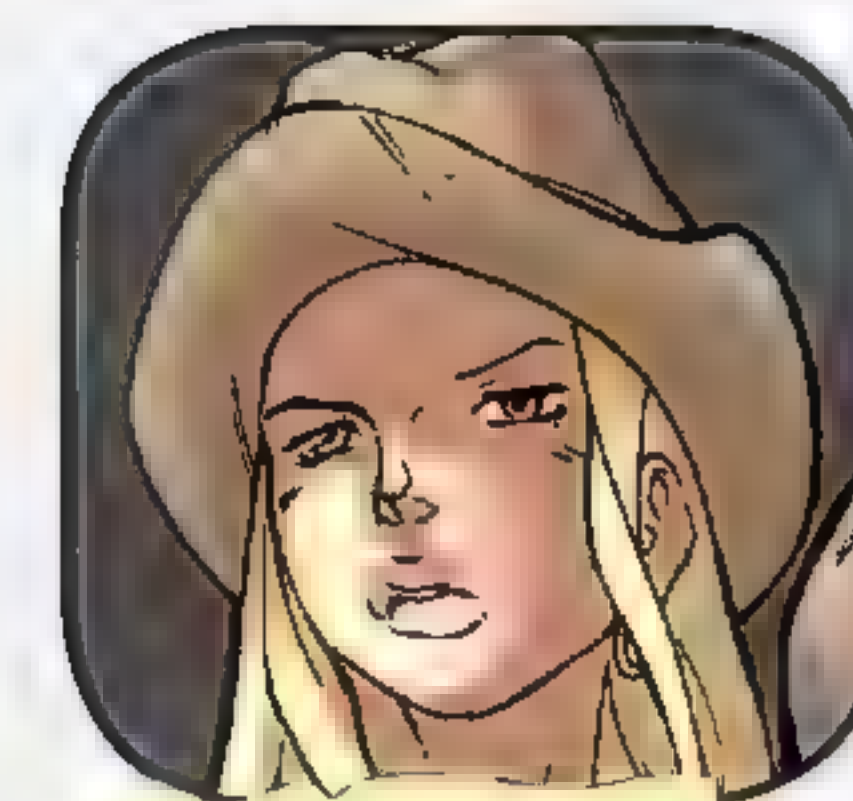
SAGURI



TASKMASTER



MARY ZERO



OUTLAW



ARCADE

○

PREVIOUSLY

○

EXCERPTED FROM THE THOUGHTS OF A NEAR-DEATH ALEX HAYDEN...

THE TIME-*SAVING* THING ABOUT ONLY HAVING A MONTH'S WORTH OF MEMORIES IS THAT, WHEN YOUR LIFE FLASHES BEFORE YOUR EYES, IT'S BARELY ENOUGH MATERIAL TO FILL THE SPACE BETWEEN TWO RAPID EYE-BLINKS...AND THEN, HERE I AM, LYING IN THE DIRT, UNABLE TO HEAL BECAUSE OF THE BULLET STUCK IN MY THROAT.

EARLY CURTAIN, NO ENCORE ALLOWED.

SO I'M REFLECTING ON THIS SMALL SPAN OF TIME, AND WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT, IT'S ONLY AS I'M ABOUT TO BE WHISKED OFFSTAGE INVOLUNTARILY THAT I START TO WONDER HOW I GOT HERE.

○

I KNOW I SHOWED UP AT SANDI'S DOORSTEP, AND BEING A PERSON WITH MORE HEART THAN GOOD SENSE, SHE TOOK ME IN: A DIRTY STRANGER WITH NO IDEA ABOUT HIS OWN IDENTITY. TOGETHER WE TRIED TO MAKE SOMETHING GREAT OUT OF NOTHING. WE TRIED TO BUILD A GUN-FOR-HIRE BUSINESS; TO EACH AS HIS ABILITIES ALLOW AND ALL.

SANDI'S FORMER BOYFRIEND THE TASKMASTER, AND THE MISPLACED TEXAN OUTLAW SET ABOUT TO TRAINING ME, AND, AS PAYMENT FOR A PARTICULARLY SMELLY AND AWFUL MONKEY-CHASING GIG, SANDI AND I RECEIVED THE BATTERED THEME PARK WHERE I'M GOING TO CHOKE OUT MY LAST BREATH.

I UPSET THE WRONG PEOPLE, I GUESS, WHICH, BEING WHO I AM, WAS PROBABLY INEVITABLE. THESE PEOPLE, THE FOUR WINDS, THEY WANT THIS LAND FOR SOME HOITY-TOITY HOUSING DEAL, AND I CHOSE NOT TO SELL. THEY MADE A COUNTEROFFER THAT INVOLVED LIVE AMMO.

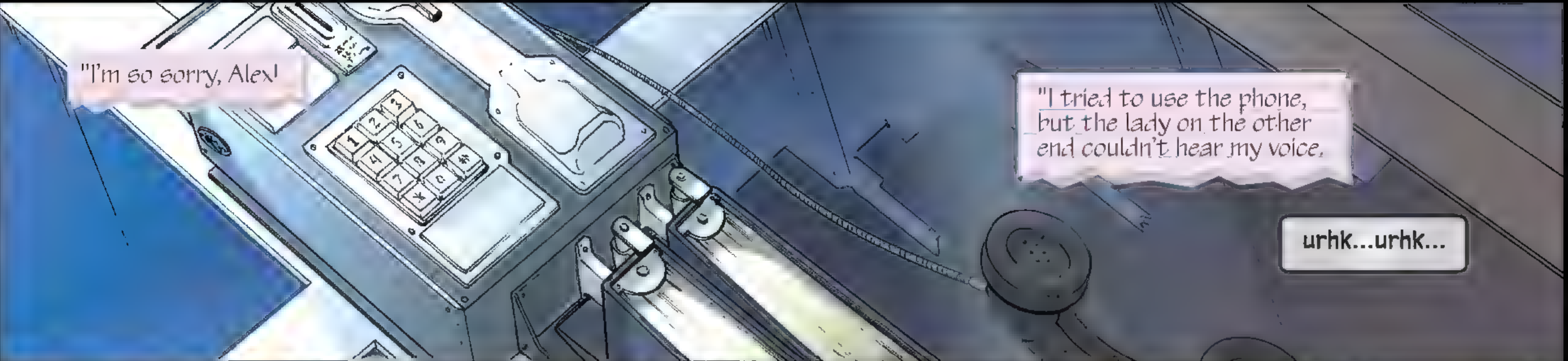
○

THERE'S A KID HERE WITH ME, MARY IS HER NAME...ASIDE FROM ME, MOST PEOPLE NEVER EVEN REALIZE SHE'S THERE, DUE TO SOME FREAK MUTANT CURSE SHE LIVES UNDER.

○

SO THAT'S KIND OF IRONIC. EVEN IF I COULD SPIT OUT SOME LAST WORDS, MARY COULDN'T PASS THEM ON TO MY FRIENDS. HEH. BUT IF I COULD SAY SOME FINAL PIECE OF WISDOM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS BEFORE I BITE IT FOR GOOD, I'D LIKE TO THINK IT'D PROBABLY BE...

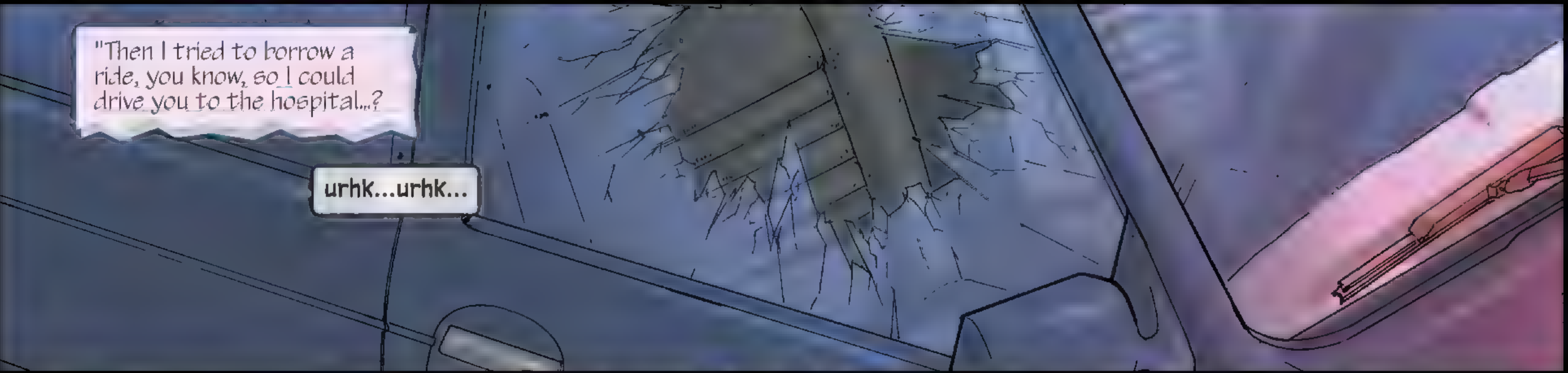
"MONKEYS ARE BAD NEWS. AVOID MONKEYS ENTIRELY, IF POSSIBLE."



"I'm so sorry, Alex!

"I tried to use the phone,
but the lady on the other
end couldn't hear my voice,

urhk...urhk...



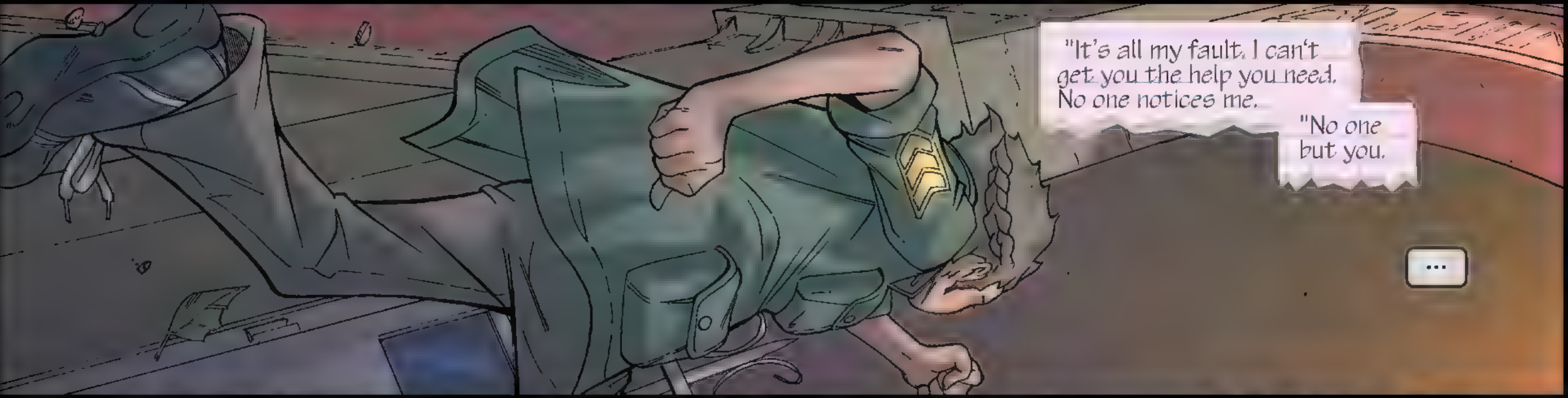
"Then I tried to borrow a
ride, you know, so I could
drive you to the hospital...?"

urhk...urhk...



"...but I don't really know
how to drive good yet!

urrr



"It's all my fault. I can't
get you the help you need.
No one notices me.

"No one
but you.

...



"And now I'm scared.
Really scared..."

...urrr...



"I'm totally
afraid, Alex."



I'm afraid
you're going to
die before you can
ever know that you're
my boyfriend
forever.

urhk...





Oh,
good lord!
No!

What sort
of *complete bastard*
sets fire to an *innocent*
carousel?

That's a turn-of-the-century
Gervoise! The horses
are *hand-carved*
basswood!

There are less
than a dozen left in this
hemisphere, you vile and
hideous thing!



...urhk...



Leave him
alone!

Hey, boss--
there's a dead guy
over here smells like
kerosene. *He* musta
torched the
merry-go-round,
I bet.

Eh?



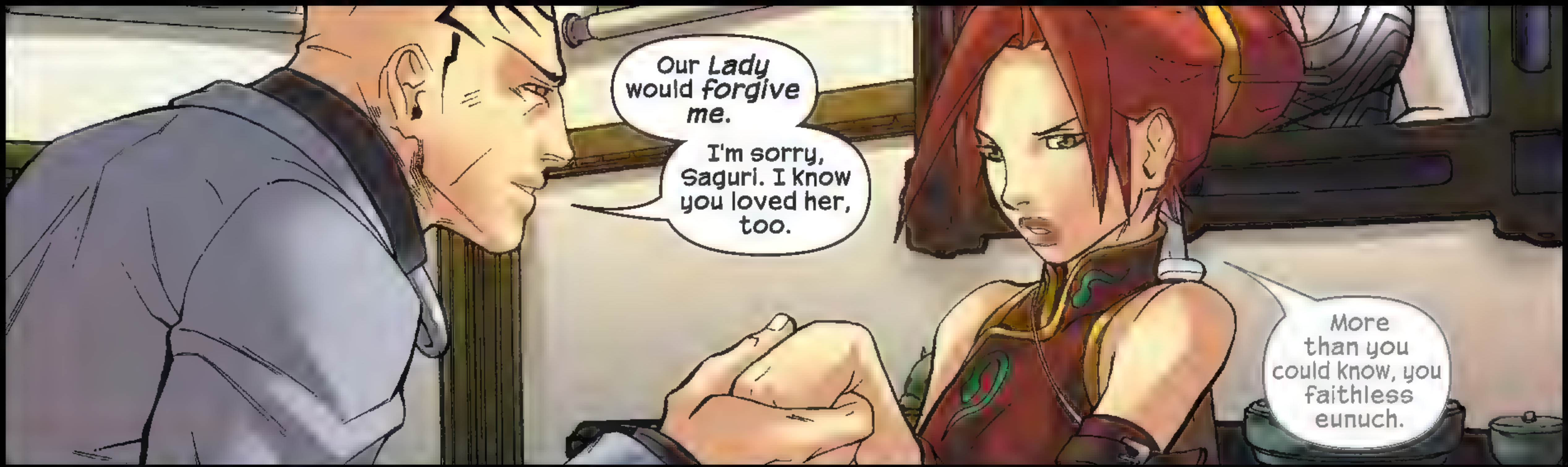
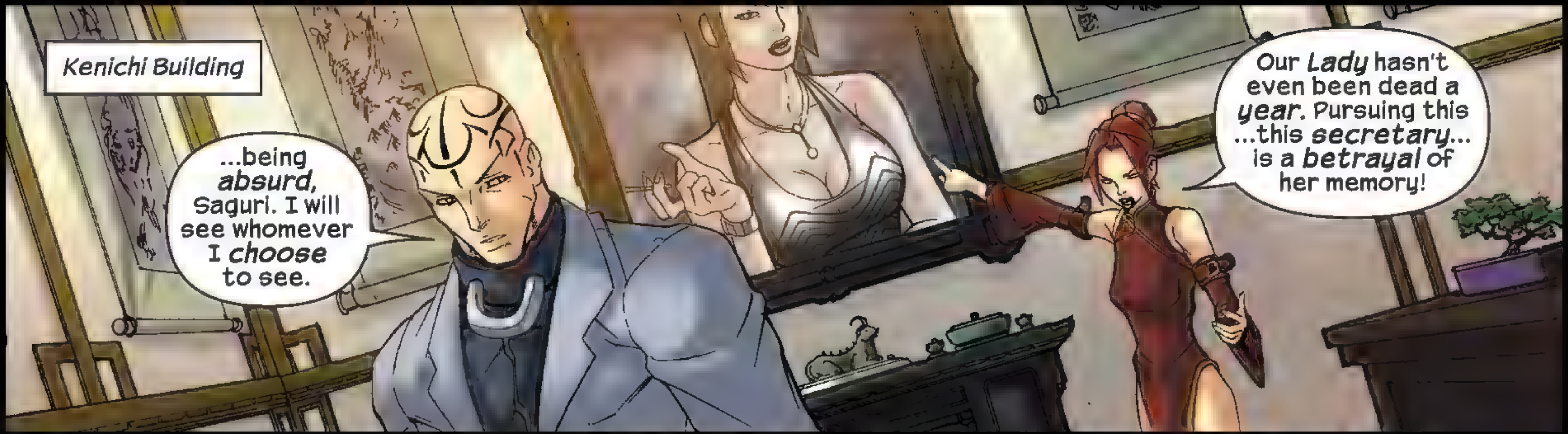
Well! Then I
guess *somebody*
here deserves
a *big lolly*.

...*...



Looks like
we have ventilatory
trauma, boys. Oxygen
starvation.

Nasty
way to snuff
it.



Alpine
Park

What do you think, boys? Little incision, 'bout a half inch up from the cricoid cartilage?

That's what I thought, too.

Either of you two happen to have a pen? I suppose I should have asked that first, eh?

Take the ink tube out, would you, Miguel?

Squish

Alex?

Alex?

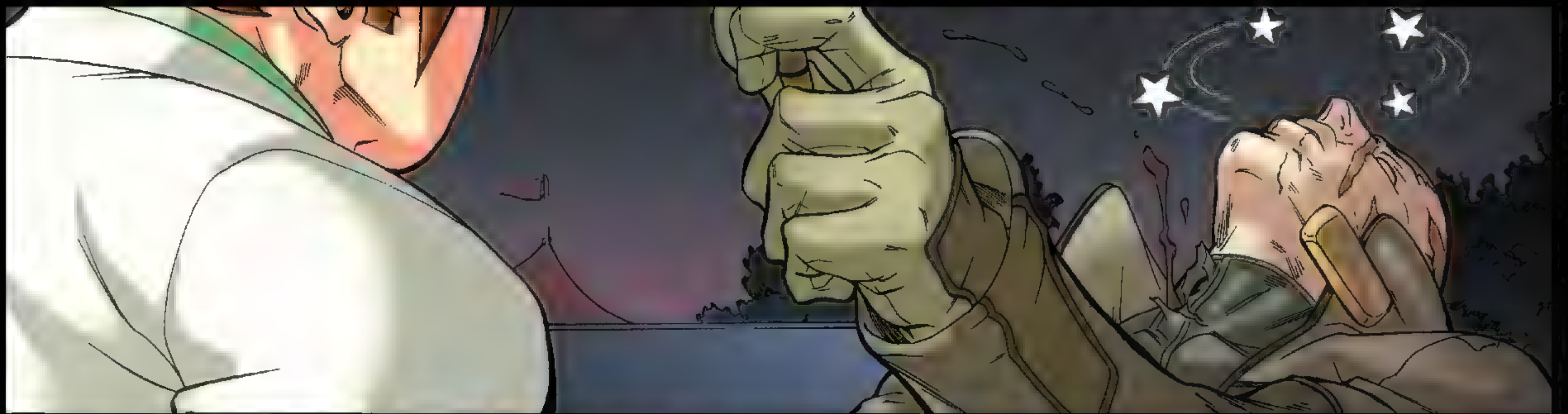
He saved you.

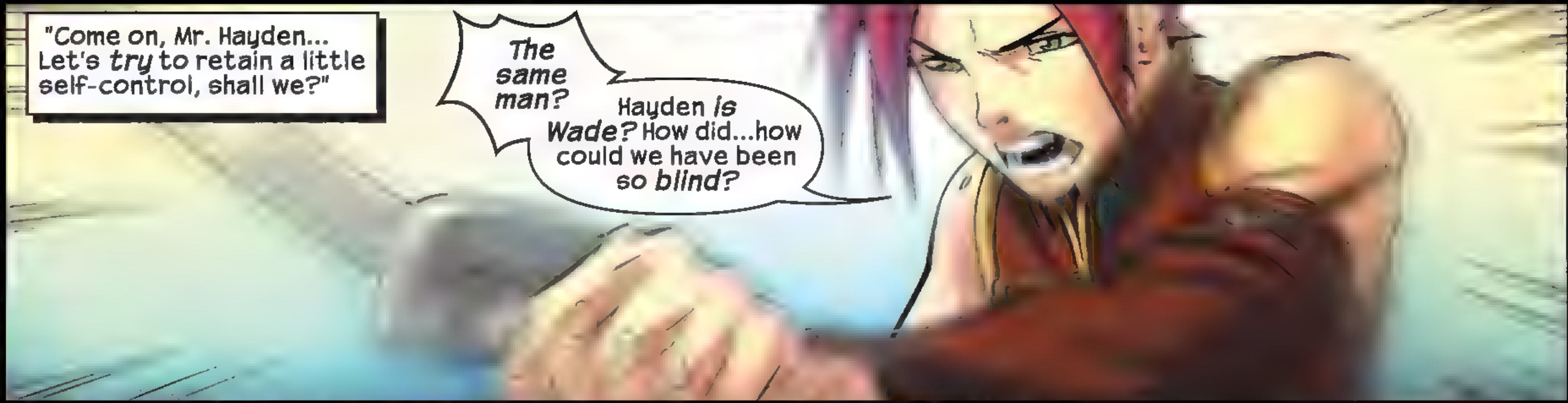
Well! You are a hardy fellow.

The good news is that you're alive. The bad news is that your carousel is *ruined*.

Amazing the things you pick up being a murderous psychotic, I find.

I *believe* you still have a bullet in there somewhere -- appears your flesh has healed around it. A disgusting but valuable talent.





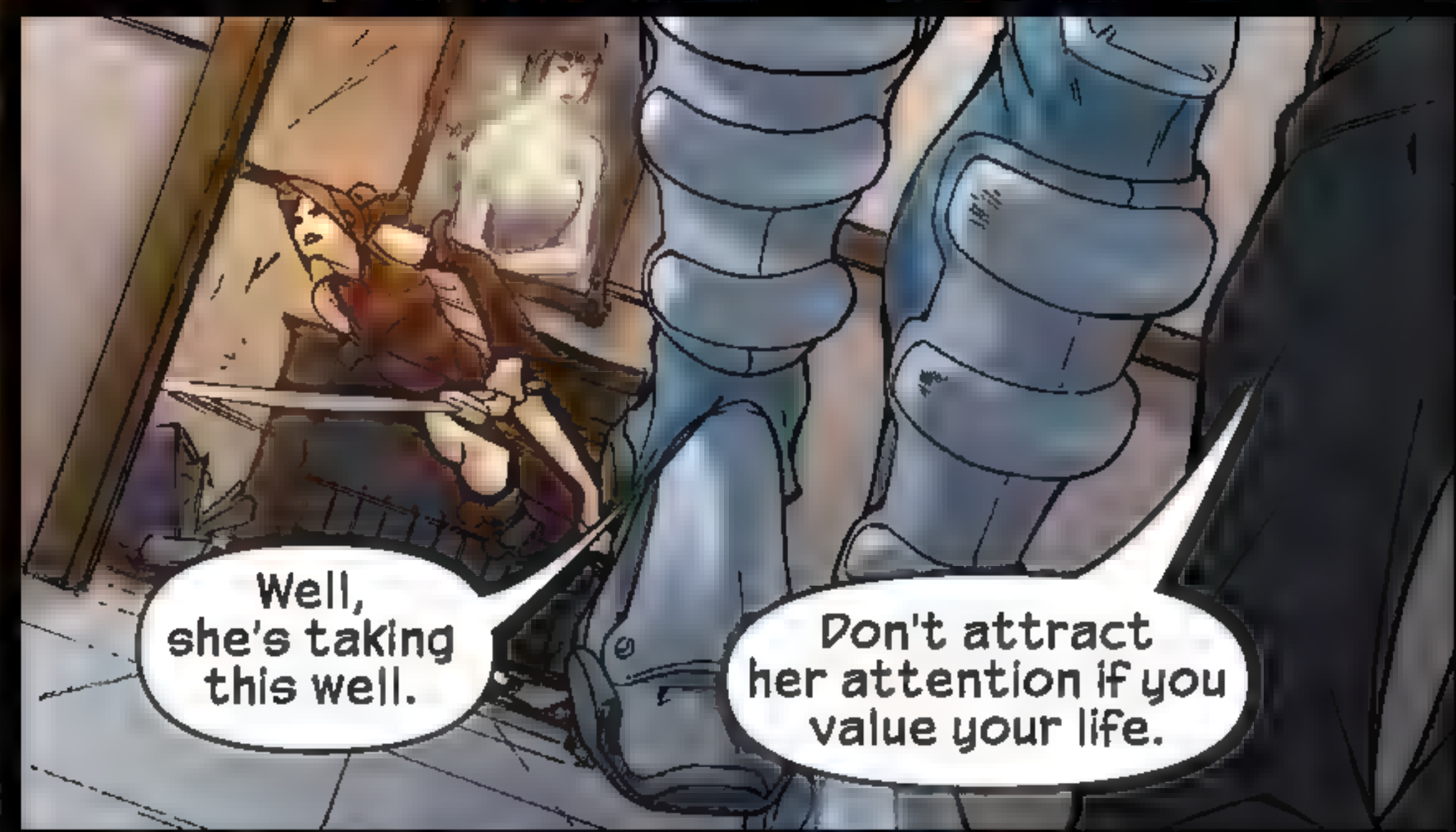
"Come on, Mr. Hayden...
Let's *try* to retain a little
self-control, shall we?"

The
same
man?

Hayden *is*
Wade? How did...how
could we have been
so *blind*?



We've
been fools!
He *murdered*
her!



Well,
she's taking
this well.

Don't attract
her attention if you
value your life.



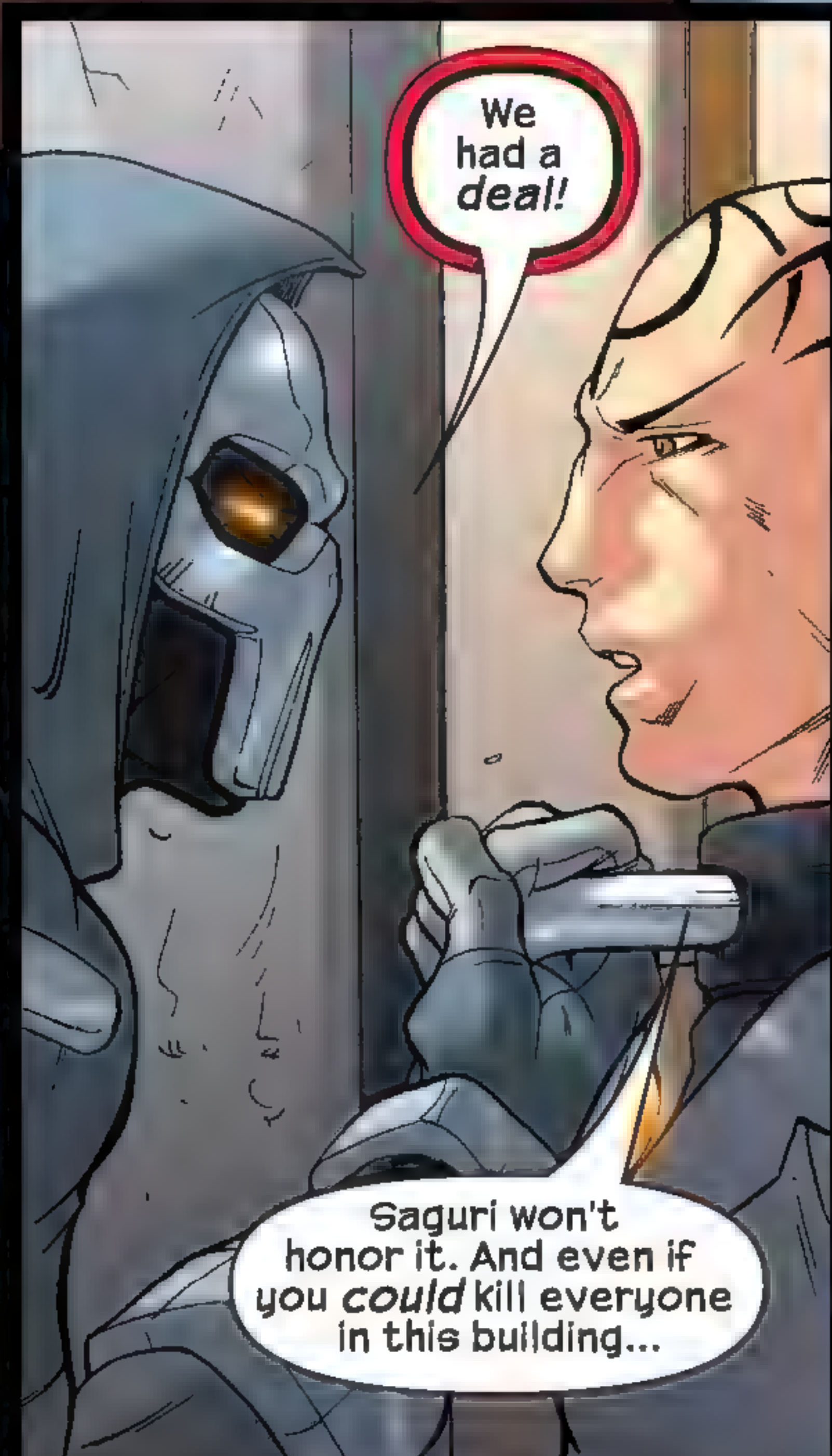
You get the deal, right? You kill Hayden a
thousand times, I don't care...but keep
Sandi out of this.

You have no idea what
you've set in motion. Saguri
will order all of your deaths for
aiding the murderer of our Lady,
and she'll have the full backing
of our board. That is her
right as Enforcer.



I know what
you're used to,
'Taskmaster.'

We're not
costumed villains.
We're a corporation.
And corporations have
voracious appetites
and long memories.



We
had a
deal!

Saguri won't
honor it. And even if
you *could* kill everyone
in this building...



...our global
work force is
twenty thousand
strong. You'll
never be free
of us. Never.

Get Miss
Brandenberg away
from here. Dye her
hair. Change her name.
Tell no one where
you're going.

Save
her life. I
cannot.

Stinkin'
coward!



I can help you.
You'll need more
than mechanics. You'll
need training, supplies,
replacement parts.
It'll cost you.



WILL
GET THE
\$\$\$



Sure you wouldn't
rather just sell out to
me? I'm really rather partial
to this sort of place.
Call me a hobbyist.

For instance, this
is a real beauty of a
wooden coaster. File down
the brakes, change the angle
of descent, and you'd
have a real killer.



Really?

To each
his own, I
suppose.



Hey, what's
the fun in watching
someone die unless
they're in a giant pinball
machine at the
time? That's what
I always say.

I'll send some men. Good luck.

You!

You should have seen the truth! Your weakness kept us from it!

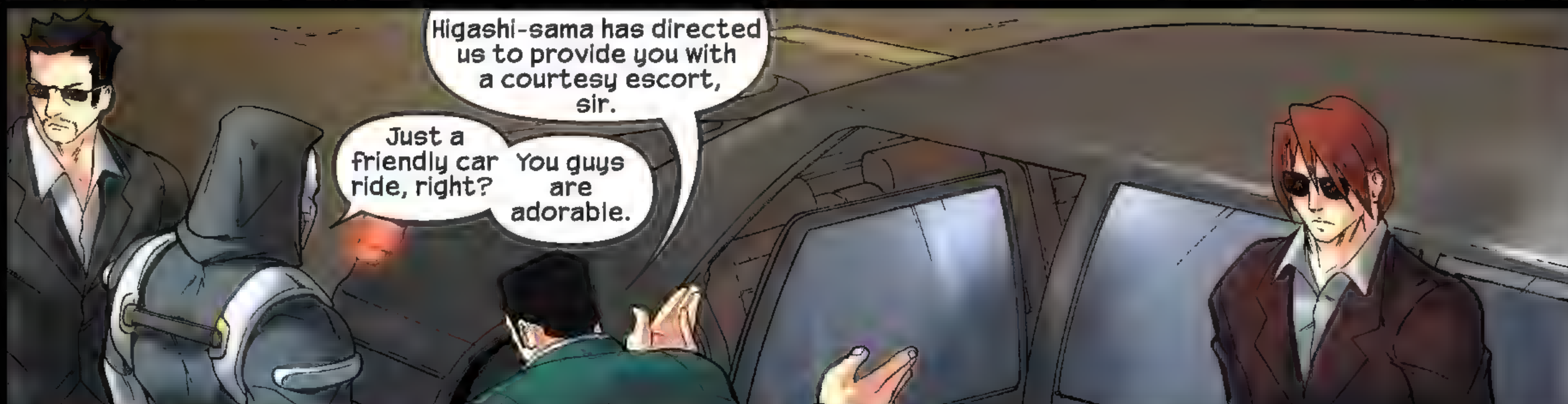
They die. They *all* die. Every gun we can hire is already being retained. You will bear this cost *personally* for your lack of judgment.

And if I order you to spare the girl's life?

Because I care for you, because our Lady cared for you...

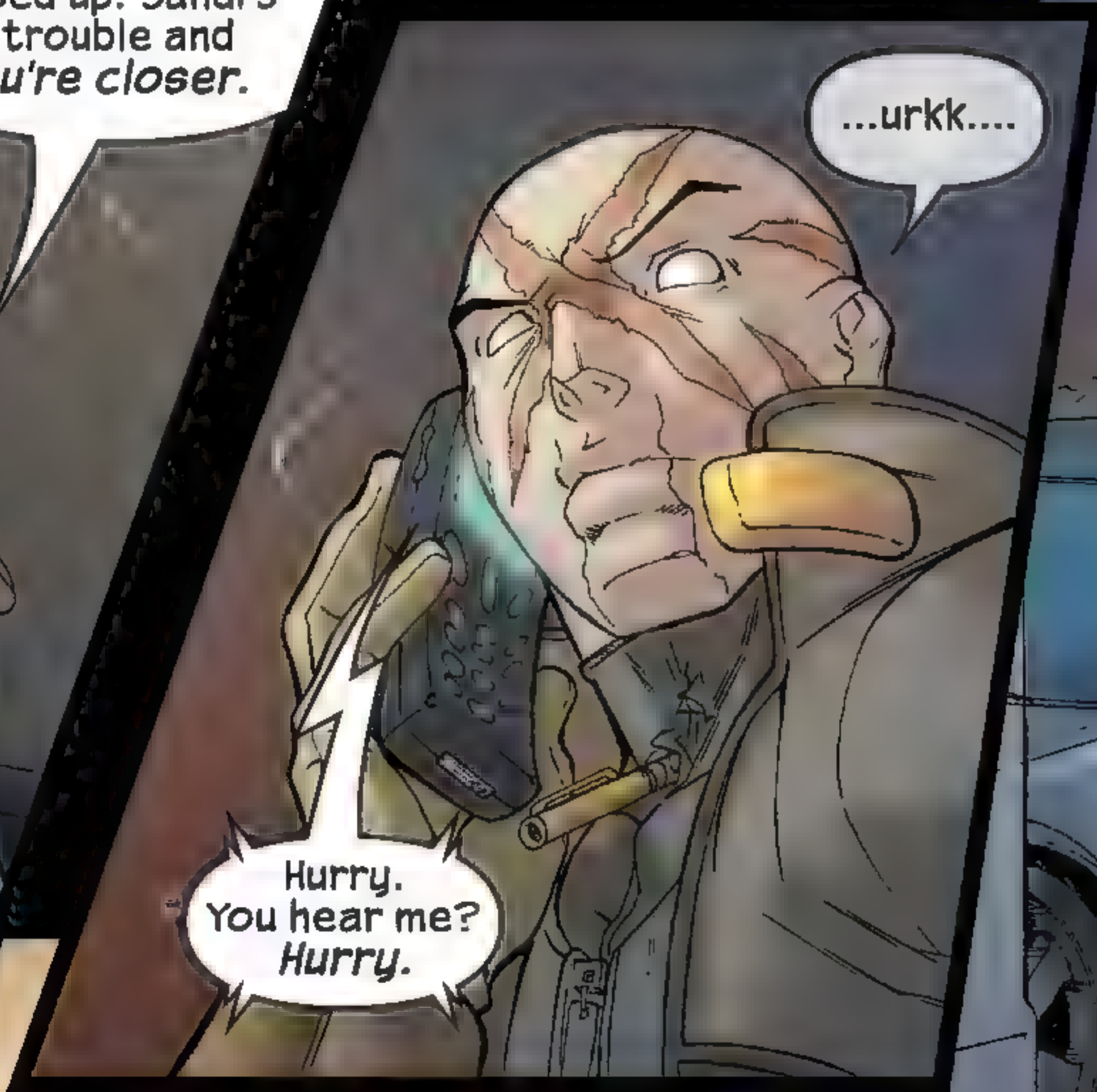
...I will act as your advisor one final time.

Do not give that order, Higashi-sama.





Hayden, *Hayden*. Listen, if you can hear me... I messed up. Sandi's in trouble and you're closer.



...urkk....

Hurry. You hear me? *Hurry.*



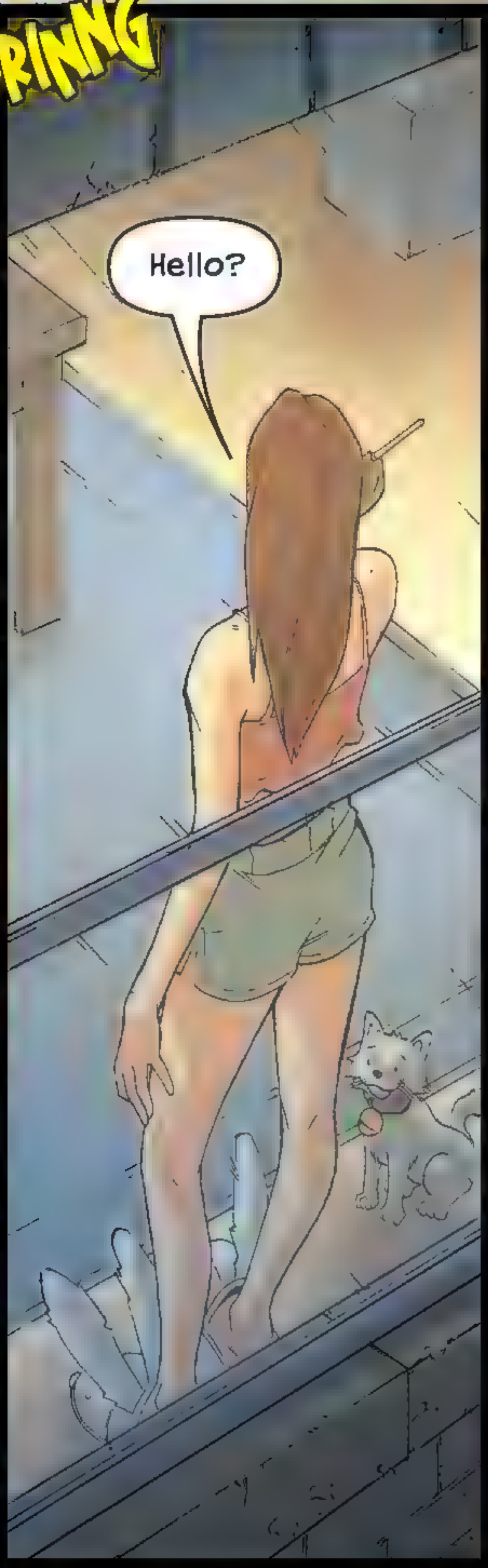
Even if she is your girlfriend, Alex--

--I hope they don't hurt her.

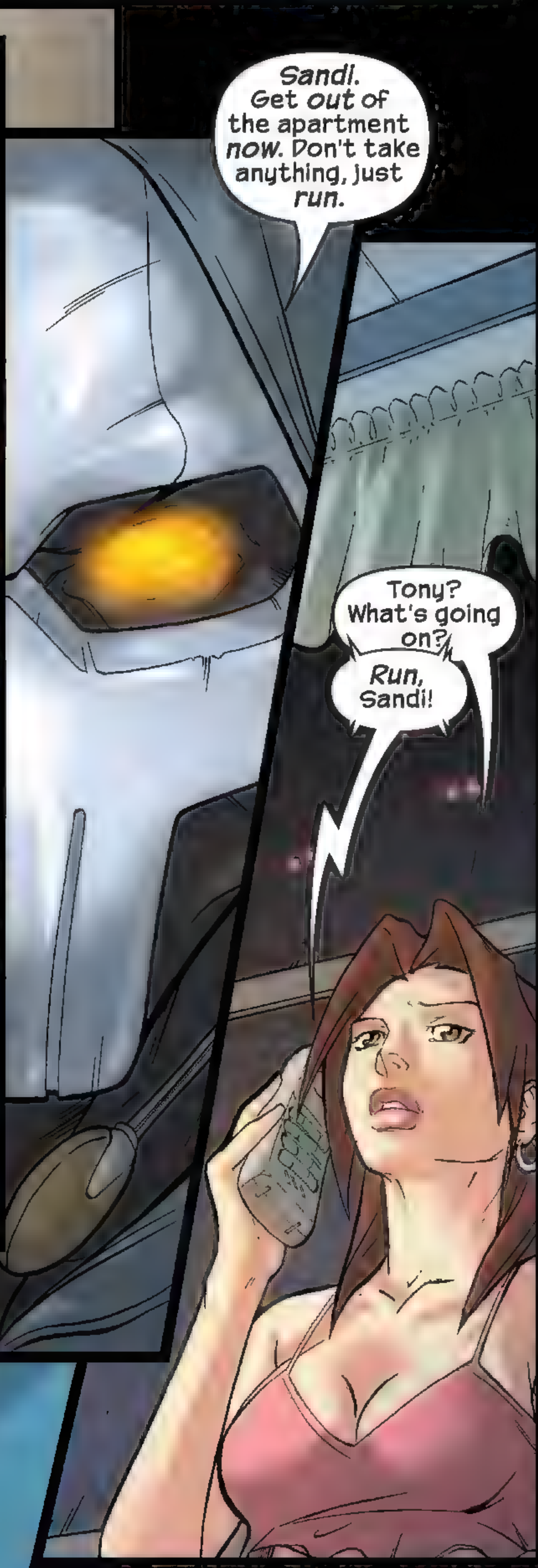


BRRRRING BRRRRING

mroooowr.



Hello?



Sandi. Get out of the apartment now. Don't take anything, just run.

Tony? What's going on?
Run, Sandi!

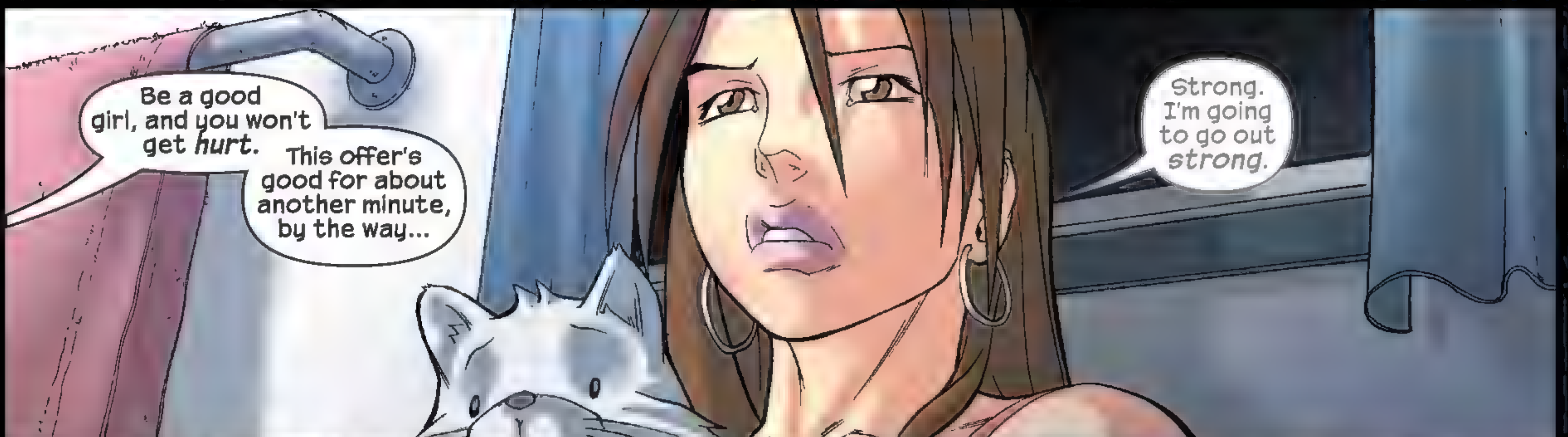
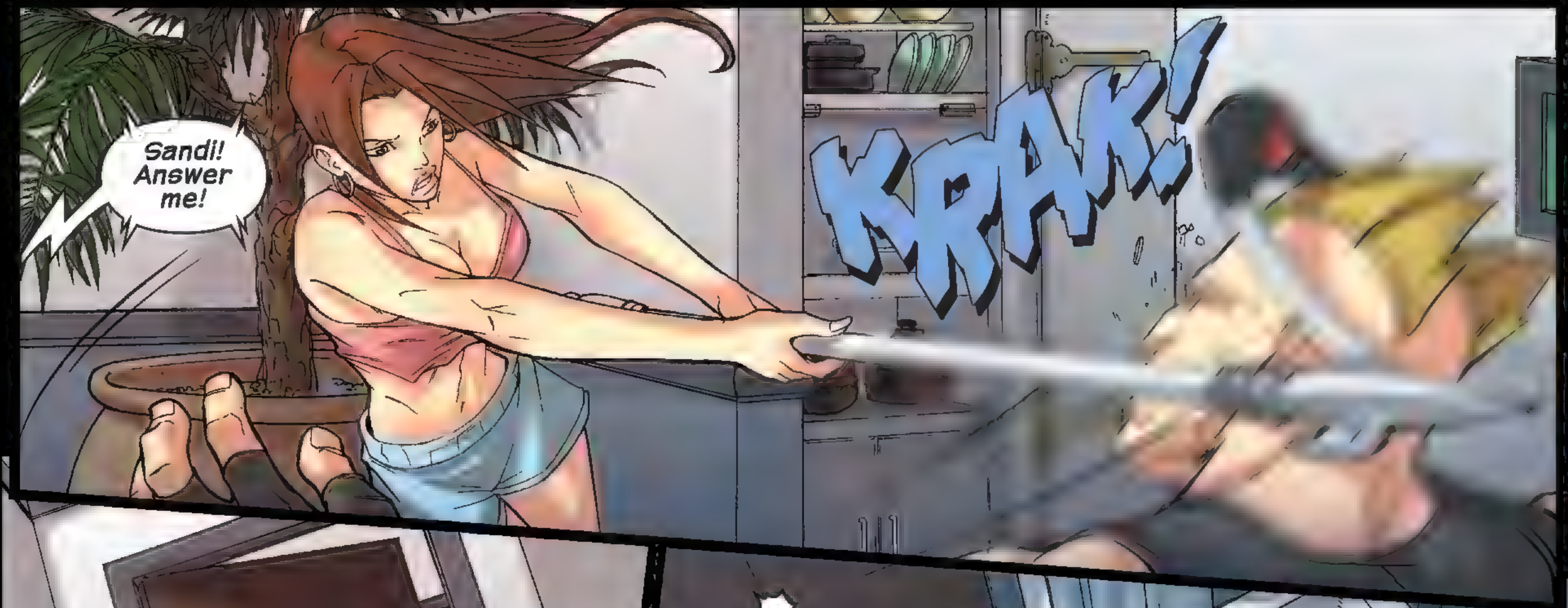


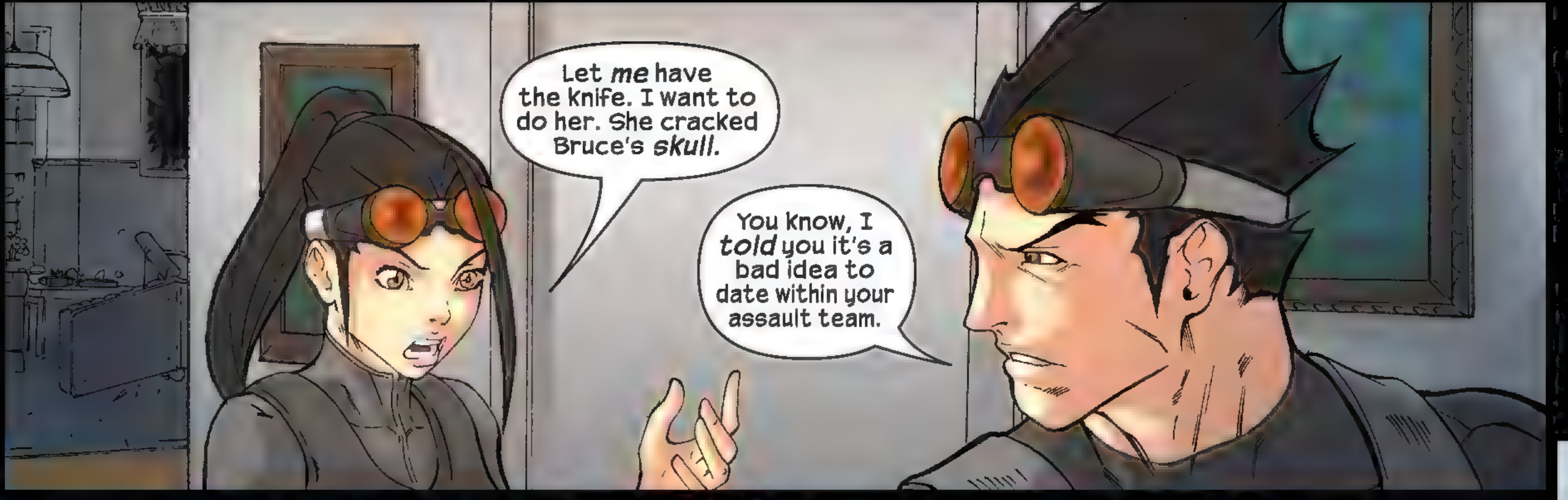
KRAASH!

Oh, no.

Mroooooowr!

Sandi? What's happening?





Let *me* have the knife. I want to do her. She cracked Bruce's skull.

You know, I *told* you it's a bad idea to date within your assault team.



I'm losing my *patience* here, lady.



What's that?

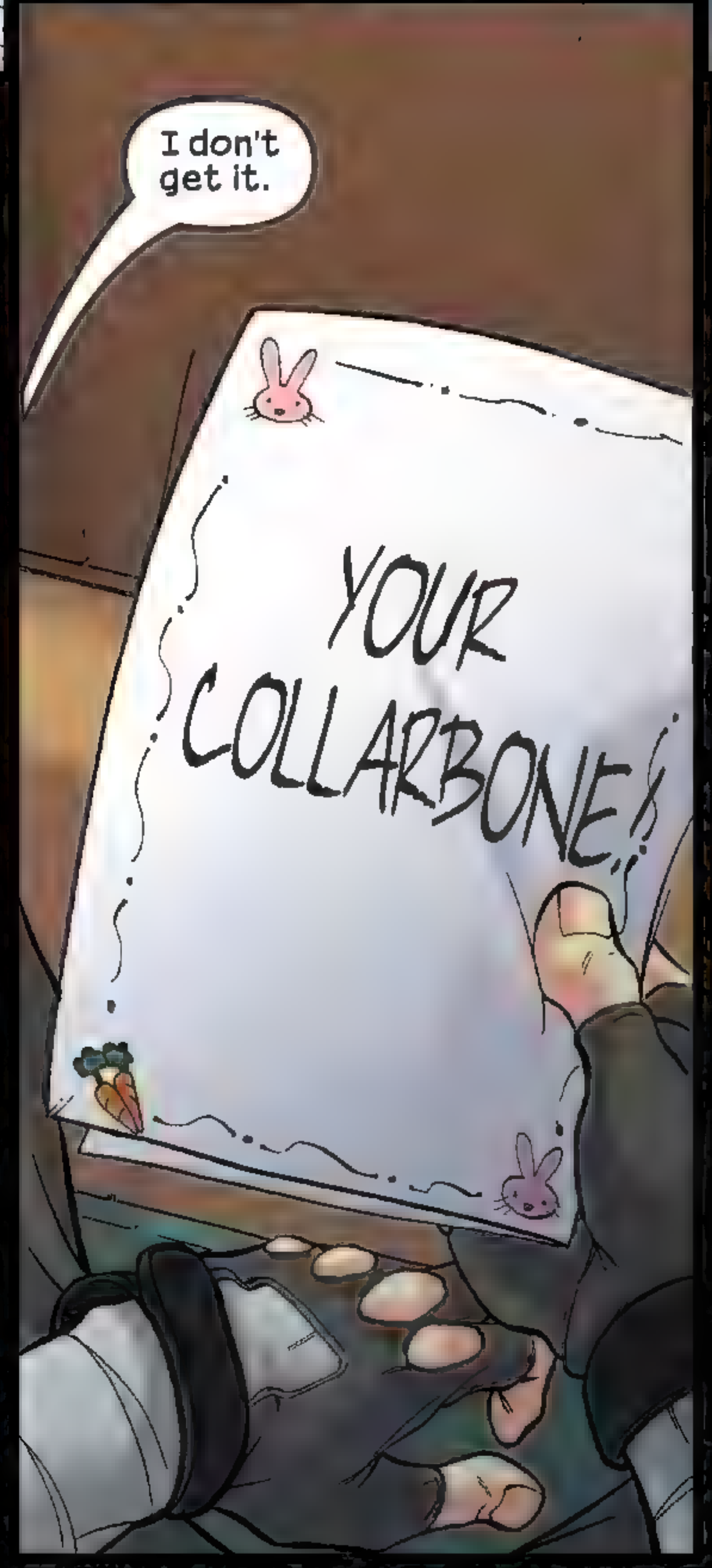
Some kind of note under the door...



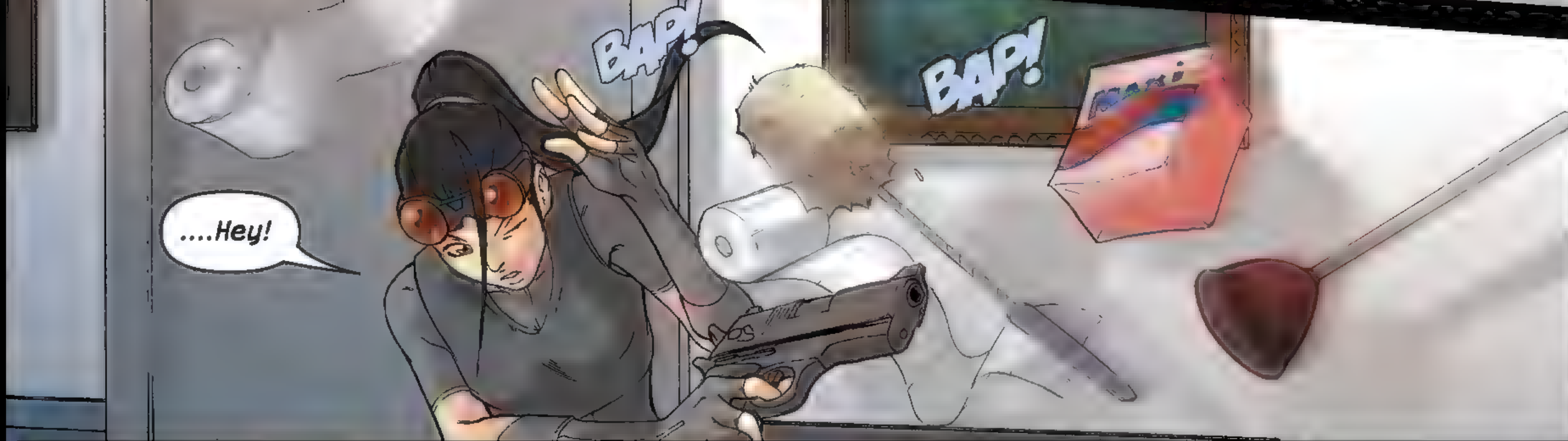
It's a riddle or something...

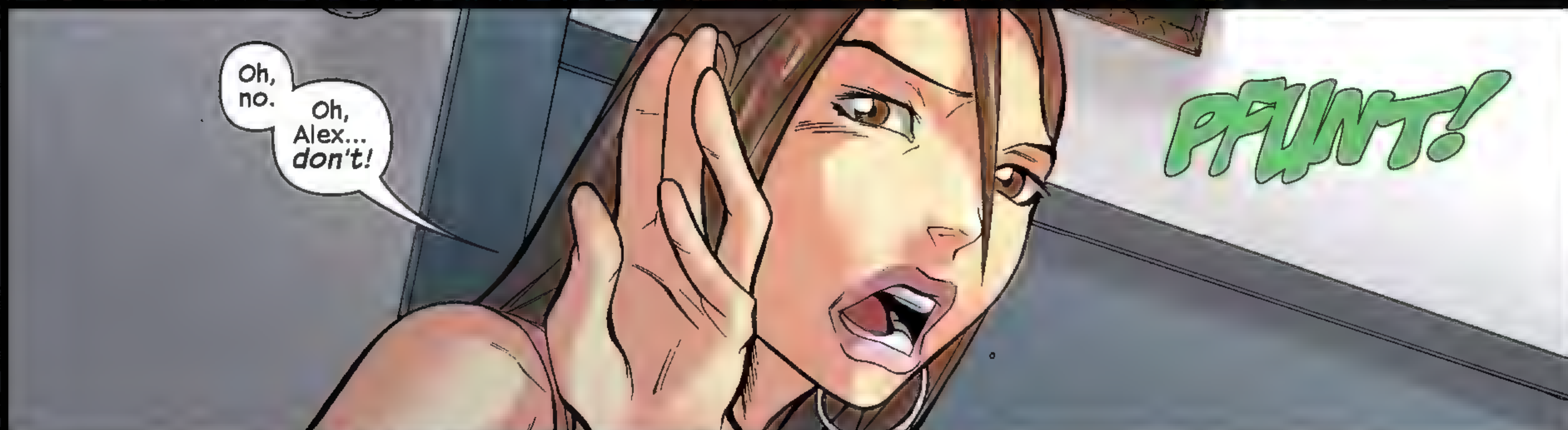
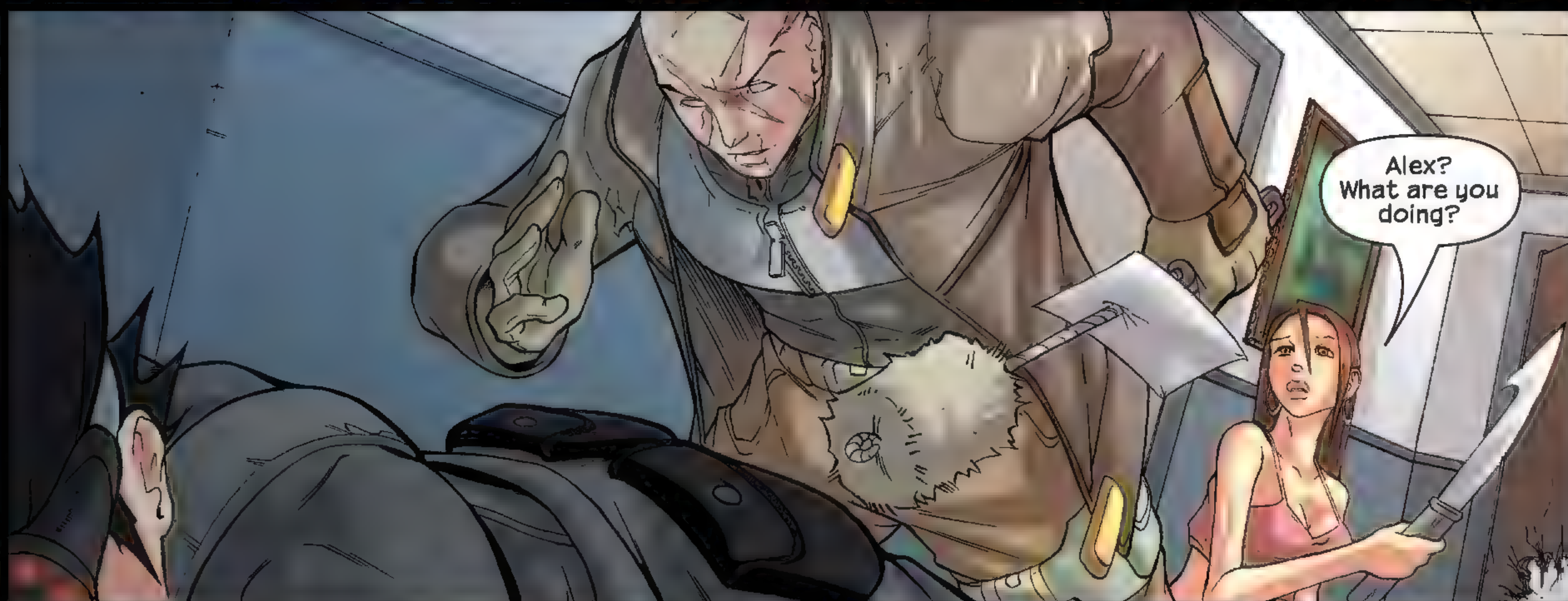
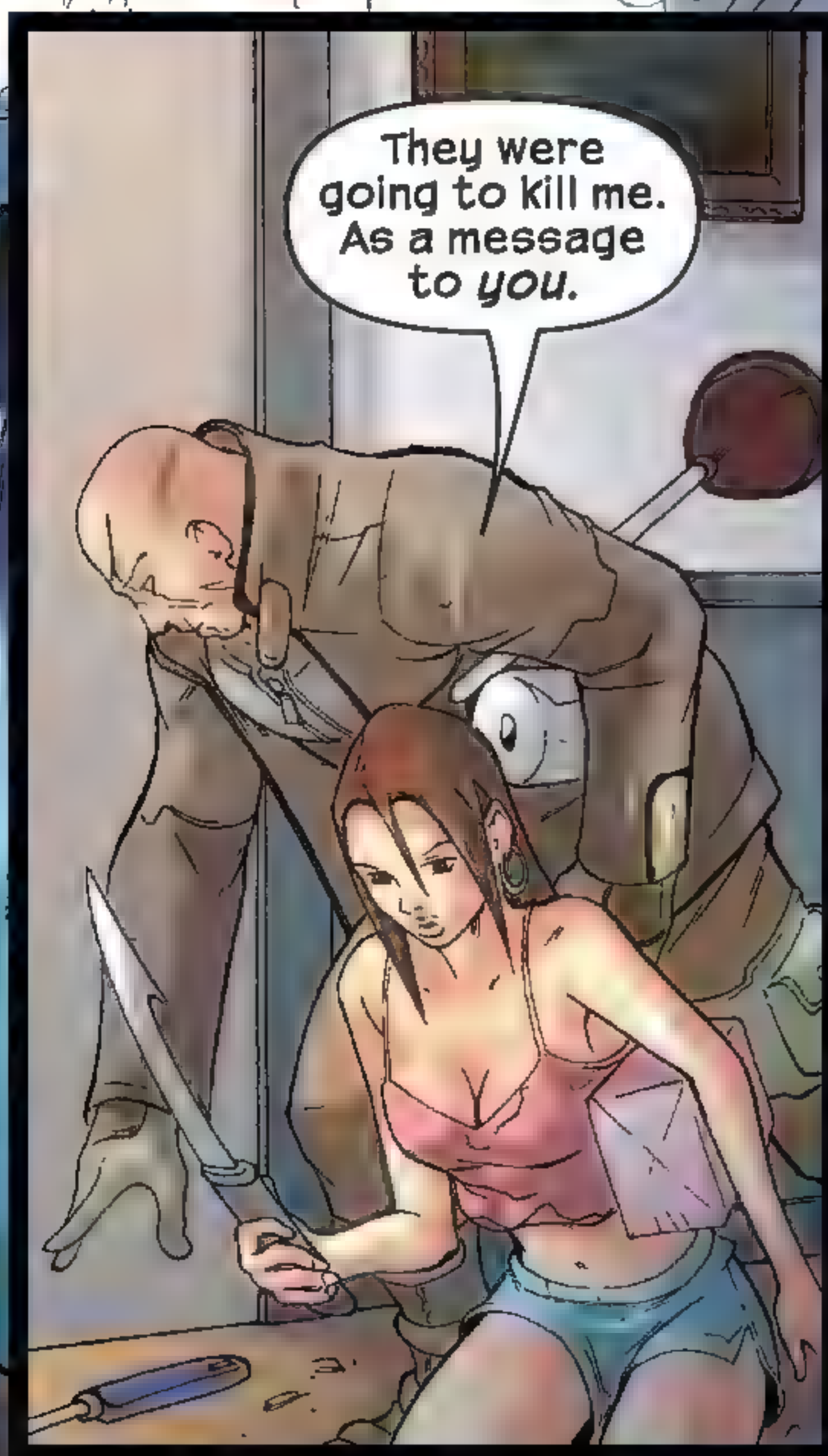
"What's white and goes 'Snap, Crackle, Pop'?"

There's another note...

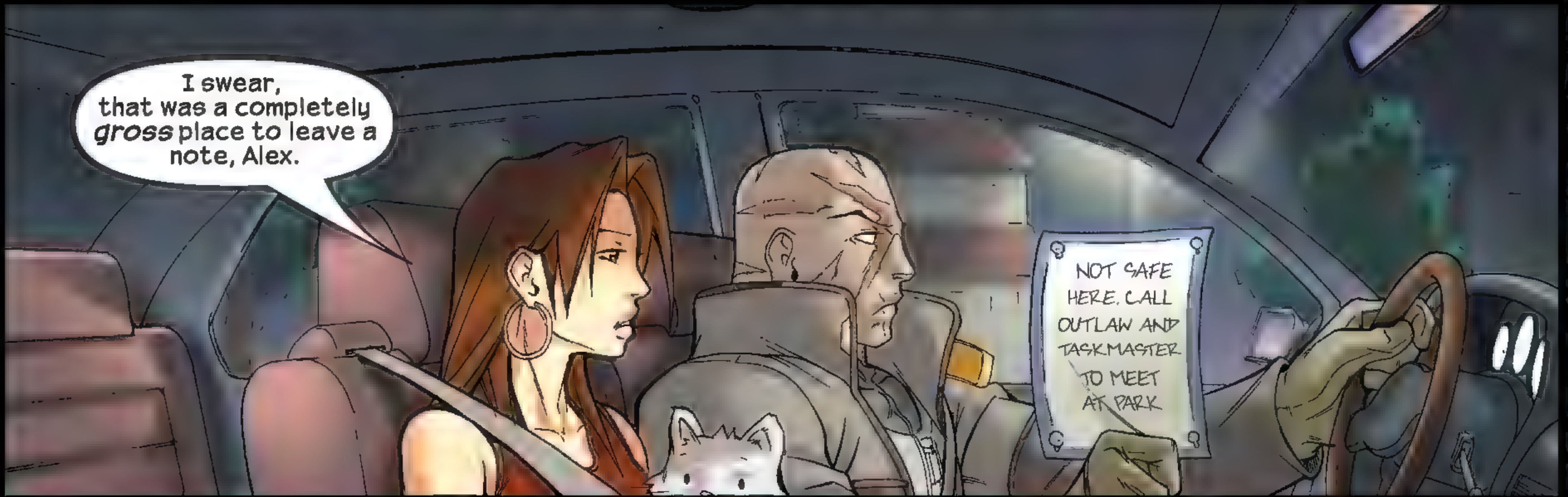
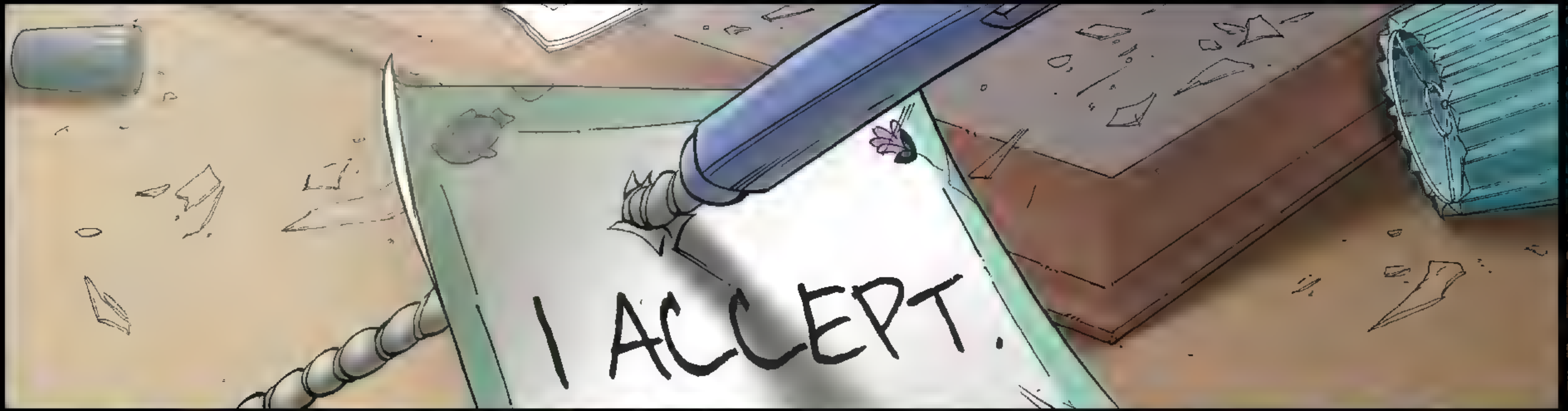


I don't get it.



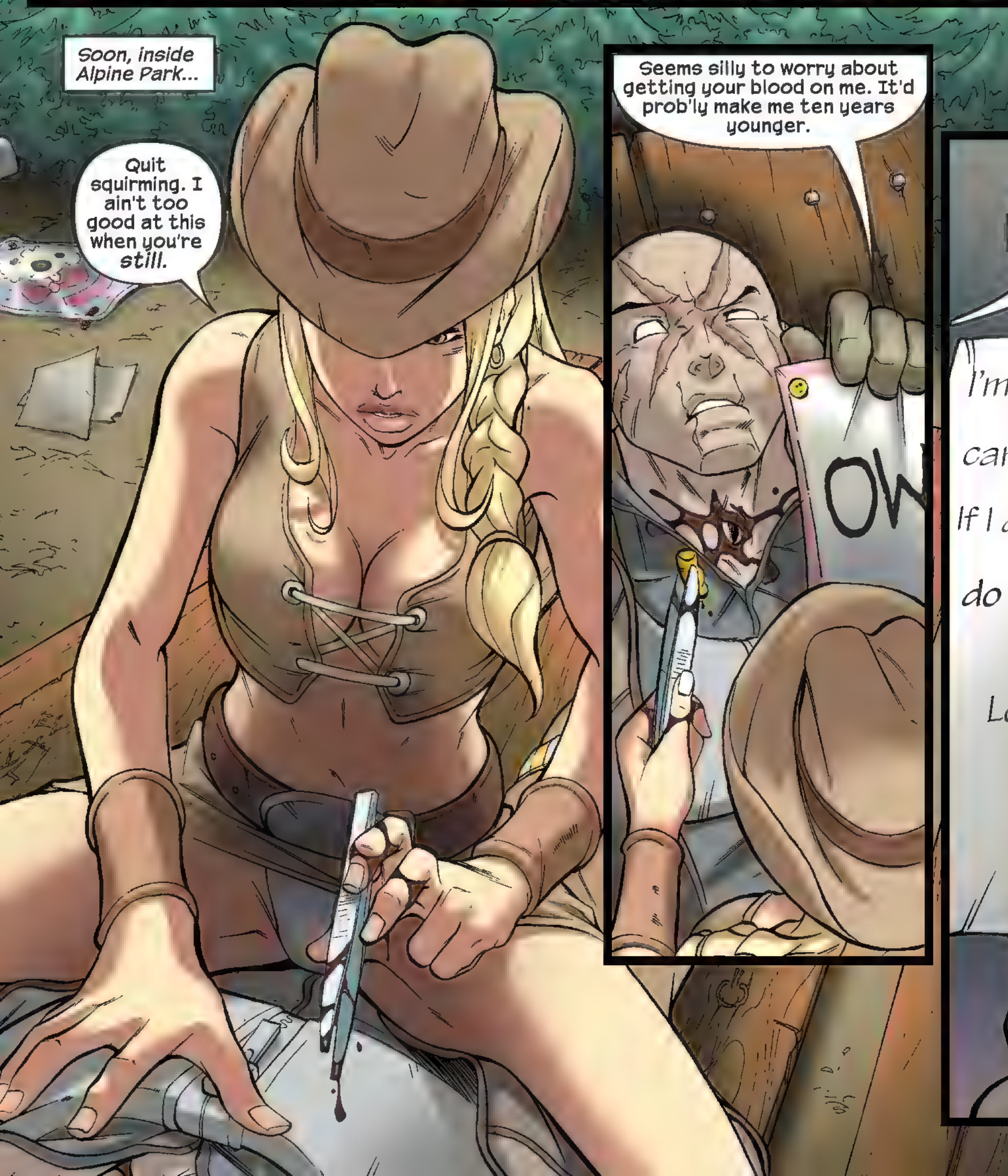


PFUNT!



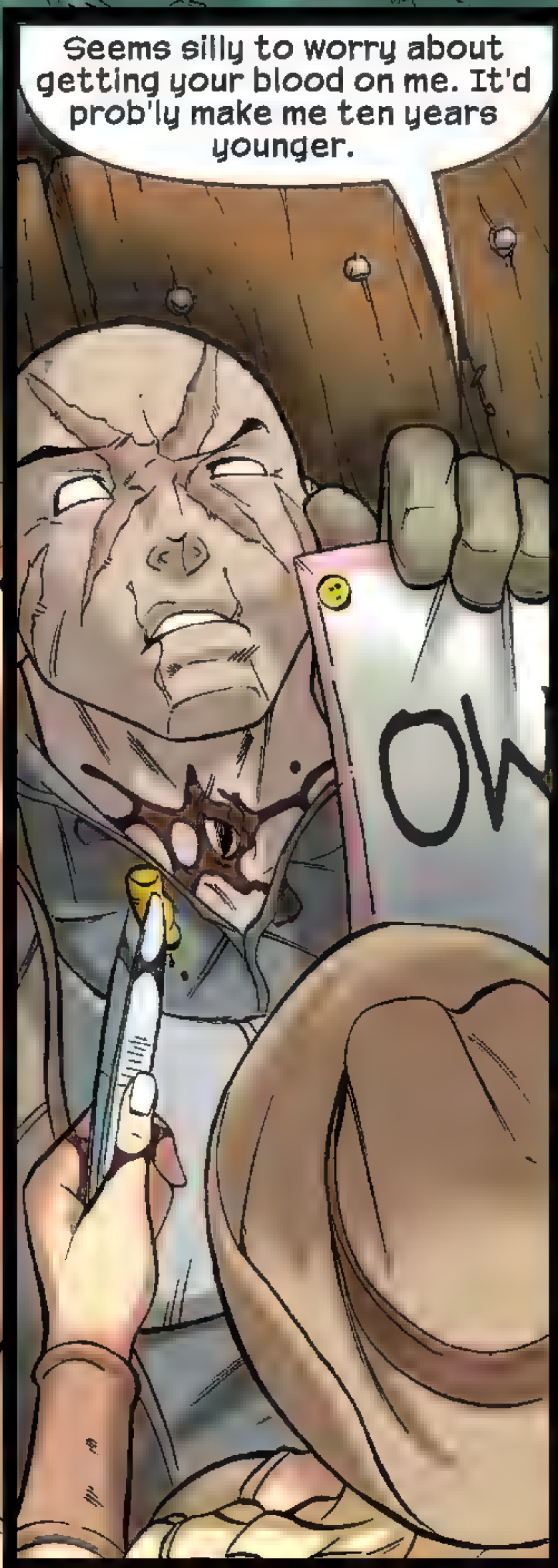
I swear, that was a completely gross place to leave a note, Alex.

NOT SAFE
HERE. CALL
OUTLAW AND
TASKMASTER
TO MEET
AT PARK

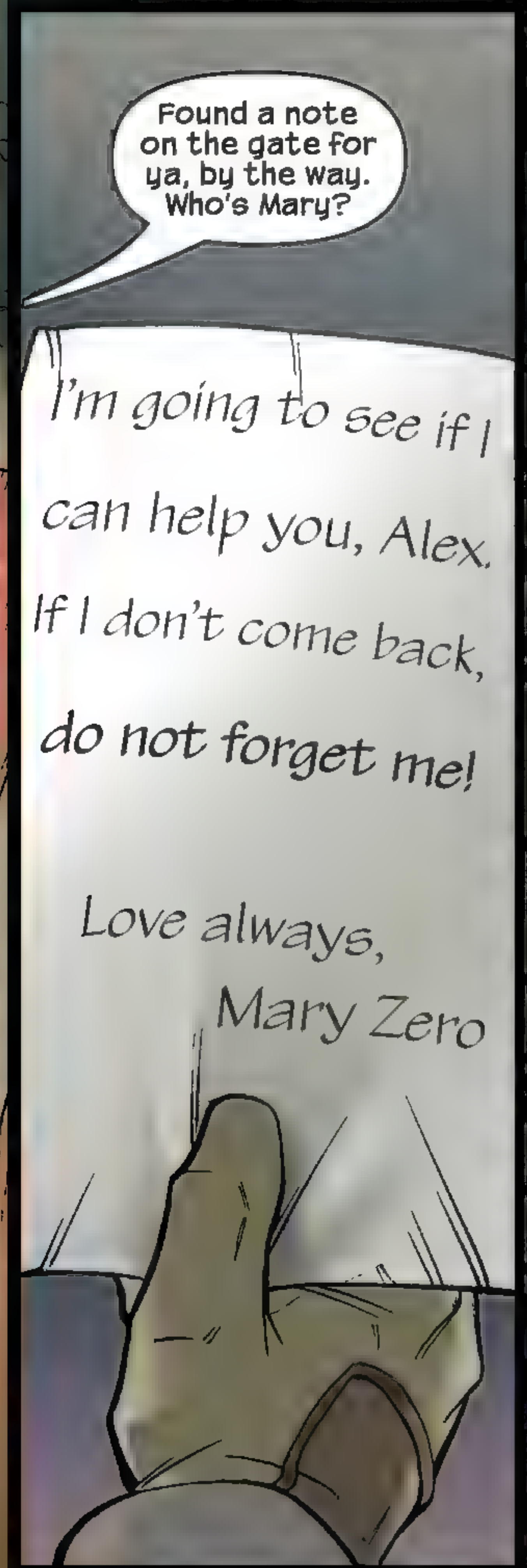


Soon, inside
Alpine Park...

Quit
squirming. I
ain't too
good at this
when you're
still.



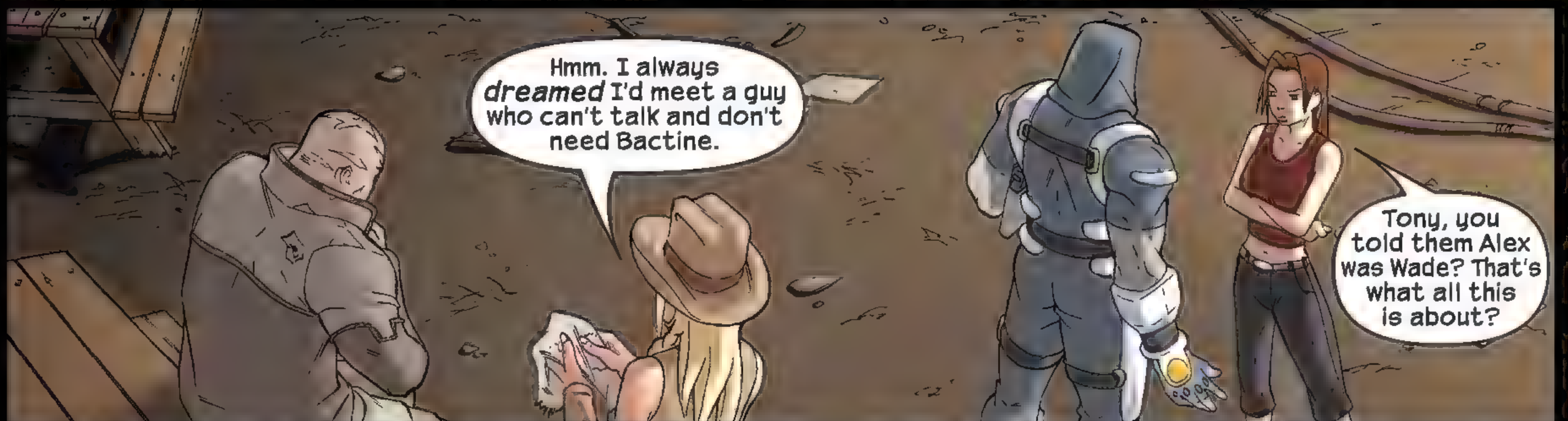
Seems silly to worry about
getting your blood on me. It'd
prob'ly make me ten years
younger.



Found a note
on the gate for
ya, by the way.
Who's Mary?

I'm going to see if I
can help you, Alex.
If I don't come back,
do not forget me!

Love always,
Mary Zero





Dawn.



WE USE THE BUS AS
COVER. IF WE NEED TO
FALL BACK, WE SPLIT UP.

ahucck.
acth.



Here they
come.



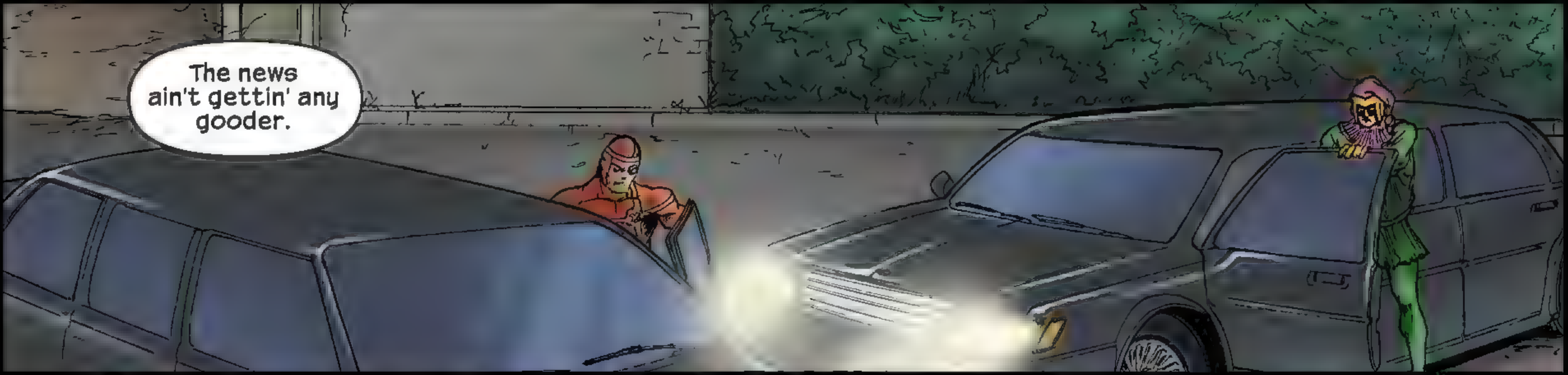
That's *it*? Those
three guys? I got all
death-wished up!



What do I
need *you two* for?
I could take *these*
guys *myse*...

Hush.





MARVEL

6

SIMONE

LEE

UDON

AGENTS X

6'

5'



ALVIN LEE ZKZ



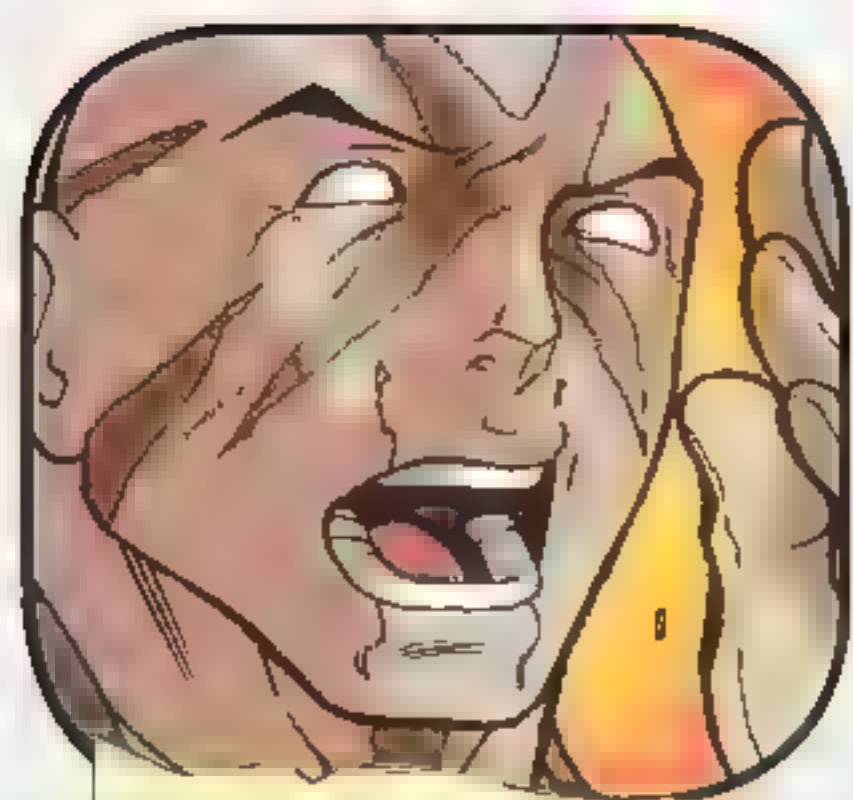
UDON



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STAN LEE PRESENTS

AGENT X



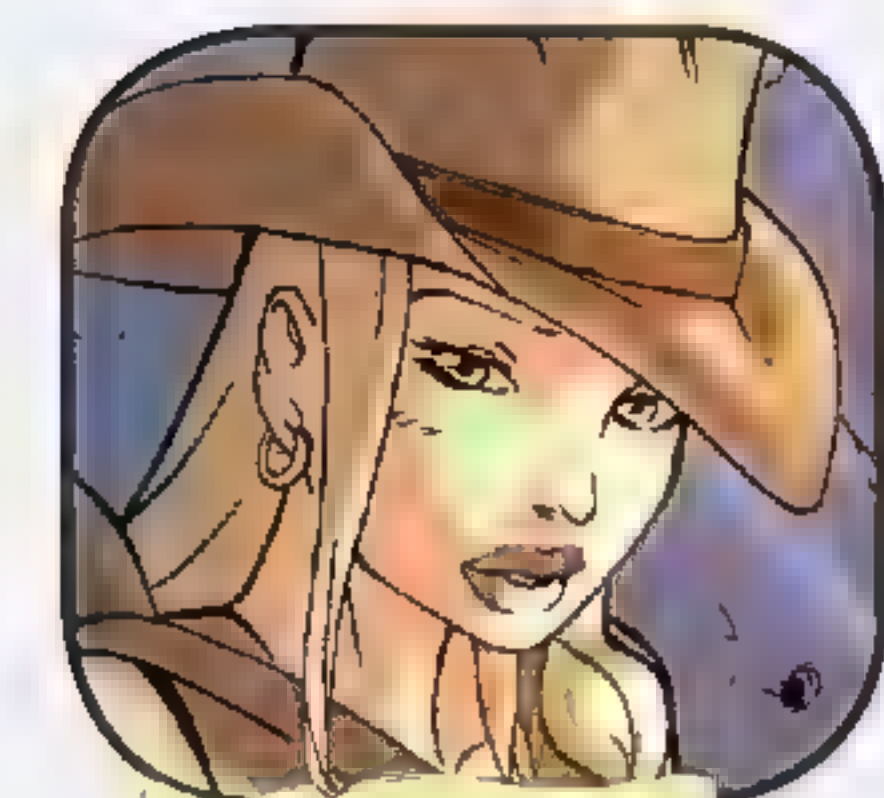
ALEX



SANDI



TASKMASTER



OUTLAW

DEAD MAN'S SWITCH PART SIX OF SIX: A LITTLE CRAZY



HIGASHI



SAGURI



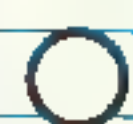
MARY ZERO



RHINO



PREVIOUSLY



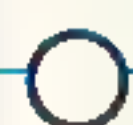
POSSIBLE LAST ENTRY IN JOURNAL OF ALEX HAYDEN

How did I spend probable last night on Earth? What way did I use the time before my likely death at the hands of dozens of hired killers?

In arms of beautiful cowgirl gazing up at sky? No.

Eating fabulous meal while getting foot massage and watching Judge Judy? No.

Spent night making calls, setting traps, moving players about in unlikely bid to survive another day. Last meal cooked by Outlaw in park's concessions trailer--suspect she ate more candy apples than self and Taskmaster COMBINED. Too polite to mention frightening appetite, possible future as beached whale to Outlaw, however. Females can be sensitive.



Problem is, even if we win fight against all these mercs and mooks, our enemy is huge corporation, can hunt us down again and again and again forever 'til death do us part.

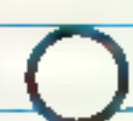
Just three of us against many, like Steven Seagal movie where no one is fat.

Our Steven Seagal movie includes:

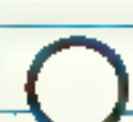
Me, Alex Hayden, "Agent X"

Taskmaster--former trainer. (Hope stabbing fetish comes in handy for a change)

Outlaw--meta-human merc, watches too much BONANZA but otherwise good people



Now, back to cunning and possibly insane plan.



Hope Sandi is okay. Hope we live through this. If not...

...gonna take a lotta creeps with me.



I see at least twenty costumed mercs and freaks. Maybe twice that many gunmen in suits. They're makin' an assault formation.

I guess these guys forgot I took on the Avengers.



You ever win against the Avengers?

I'm *SO* glad I get to die with a creep like you.



Uh...Alex, I don't know what you got in *mind*, but this ain't hardly the *time*.

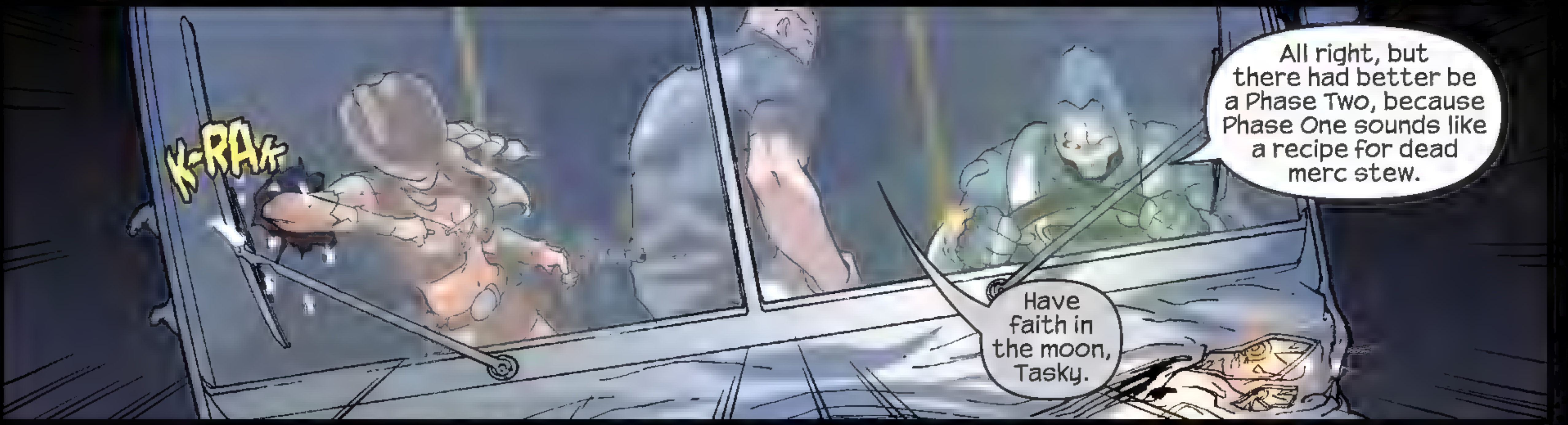
Phase One of the plan: We keep them occupied. We keep them *angry*. Deplete them and scatter them.

Hit it, Taskmaster.



And you swear you've got Sandi someplace safe?

She's with my new client. She's good.



All right, but there had better be a Phase Two, because Phase One sounds like a recipe for dead merc stew.

Have faith in the moon, Tasky.

AGENT X

IN

DEAD MAN'S SWITCH PART 6

UNINVITED GUESTS

The moon
will show you
the way!

Script by
Gail Simone

Art by UDON with Alvin Lee, Eric Vedder, Rob Ross,
Calvin Lo, Shane Law, TheRealT! & Omar Dogan

UDON Chief
Erik Ko

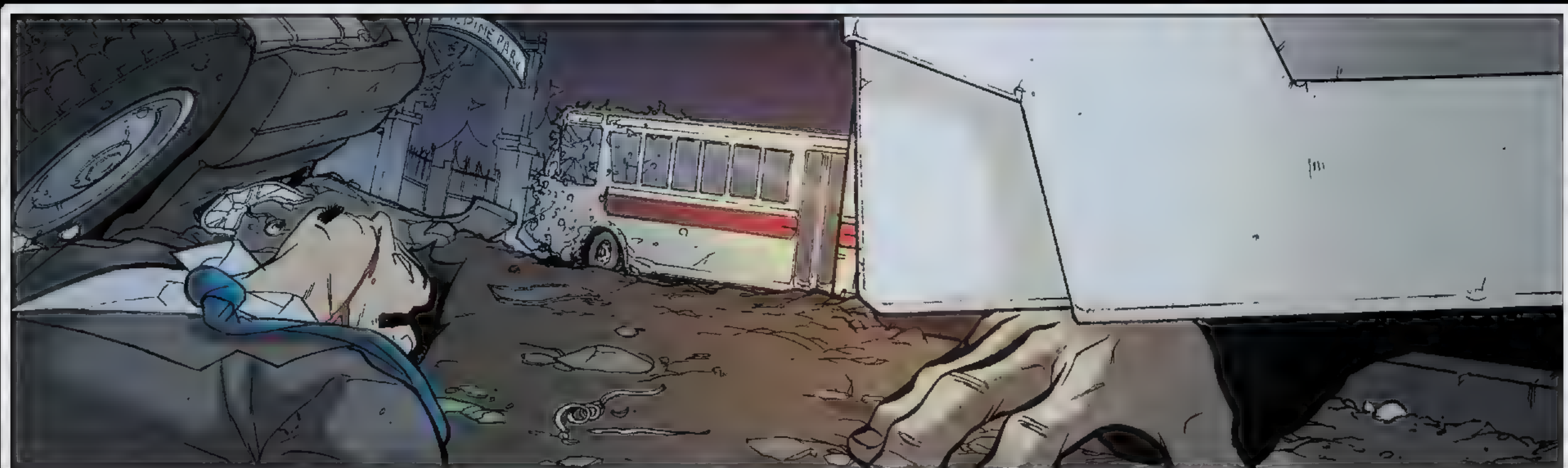
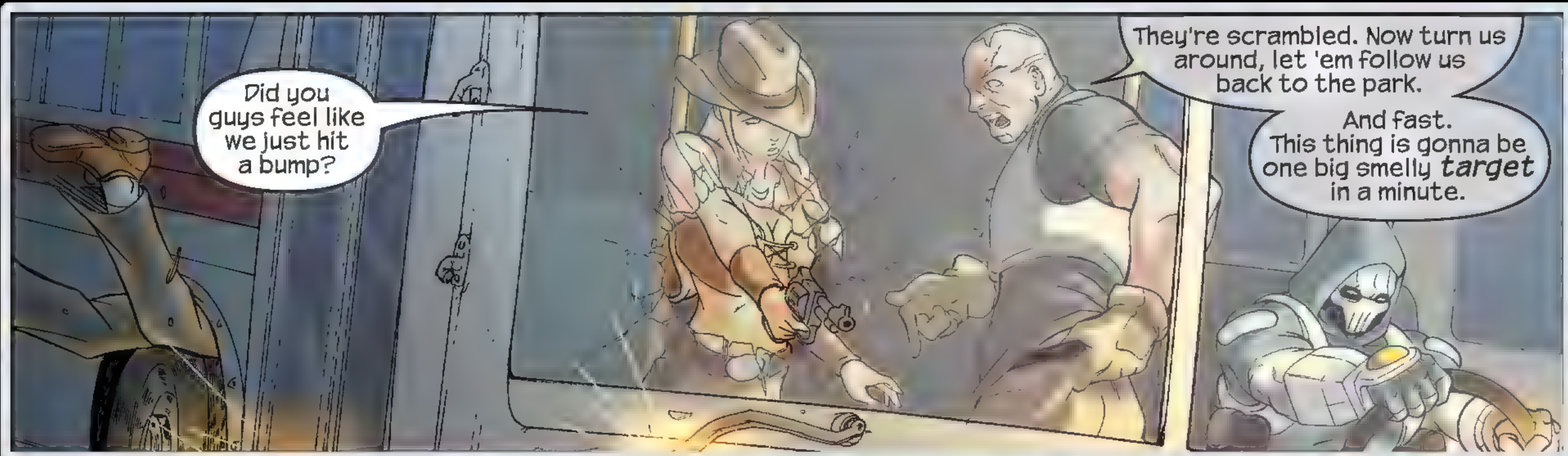
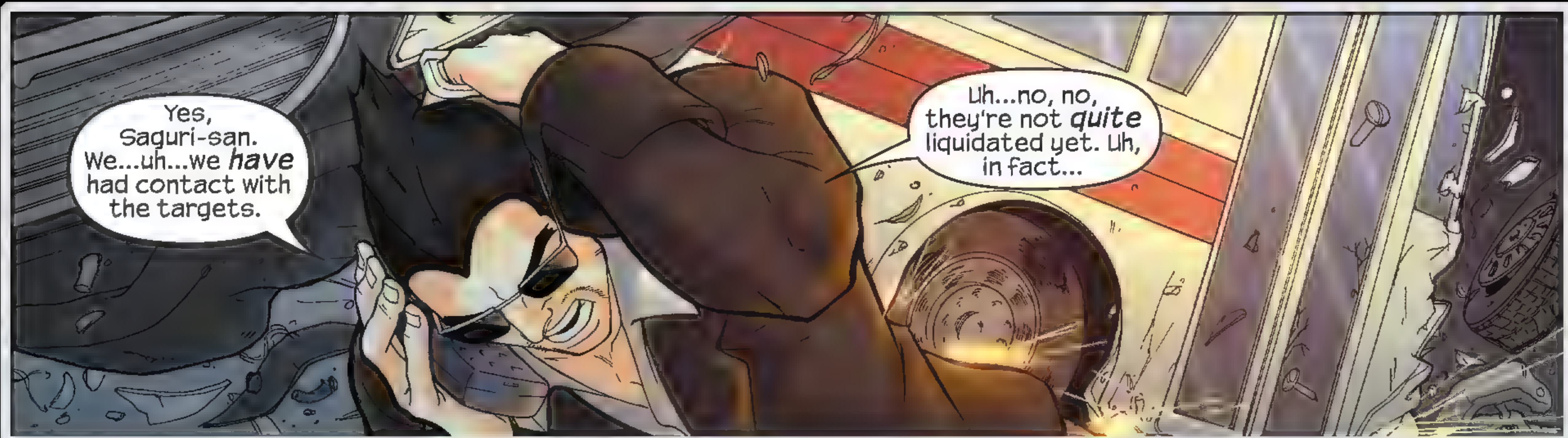
Letters by
Cory Petit

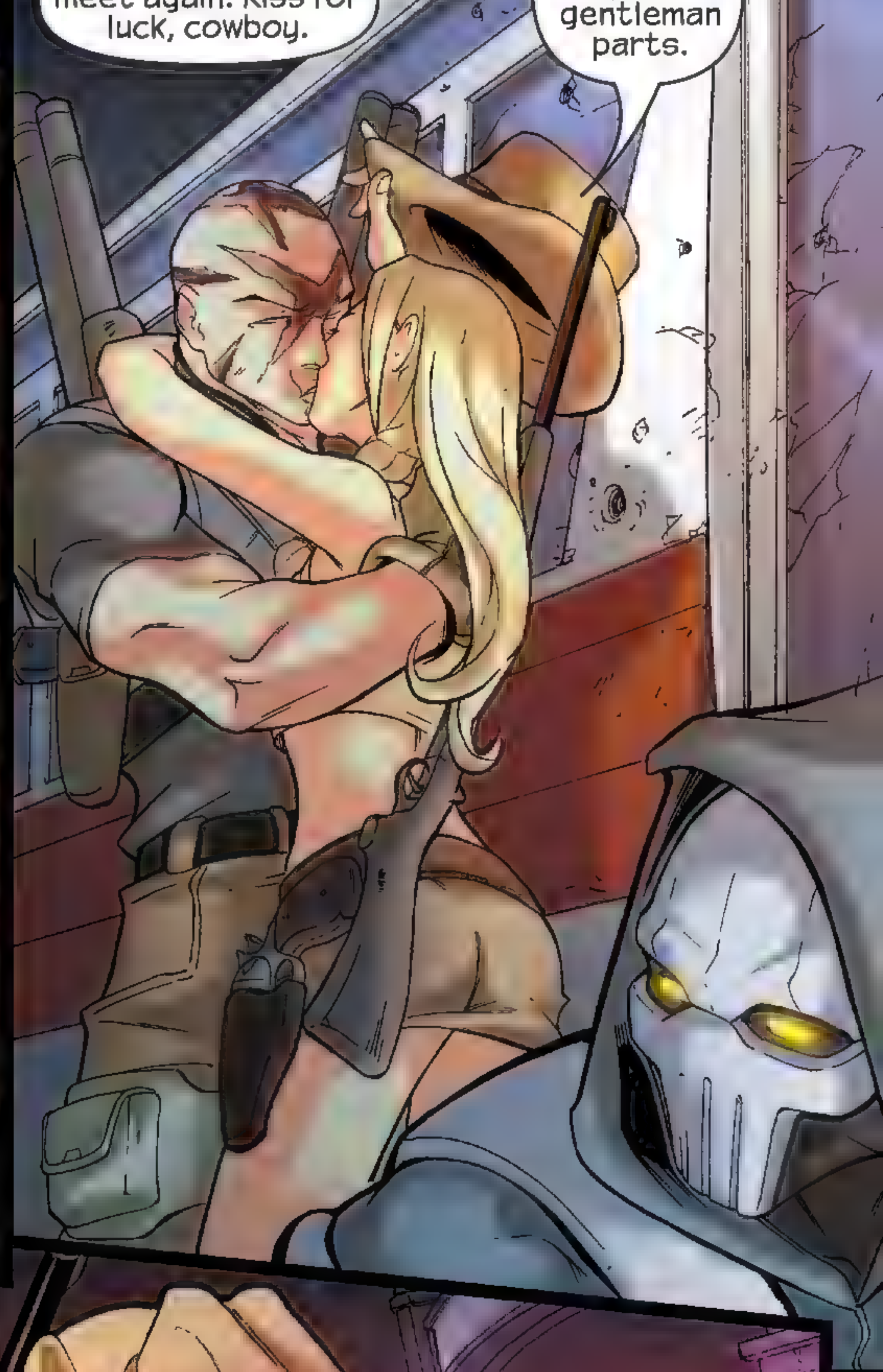
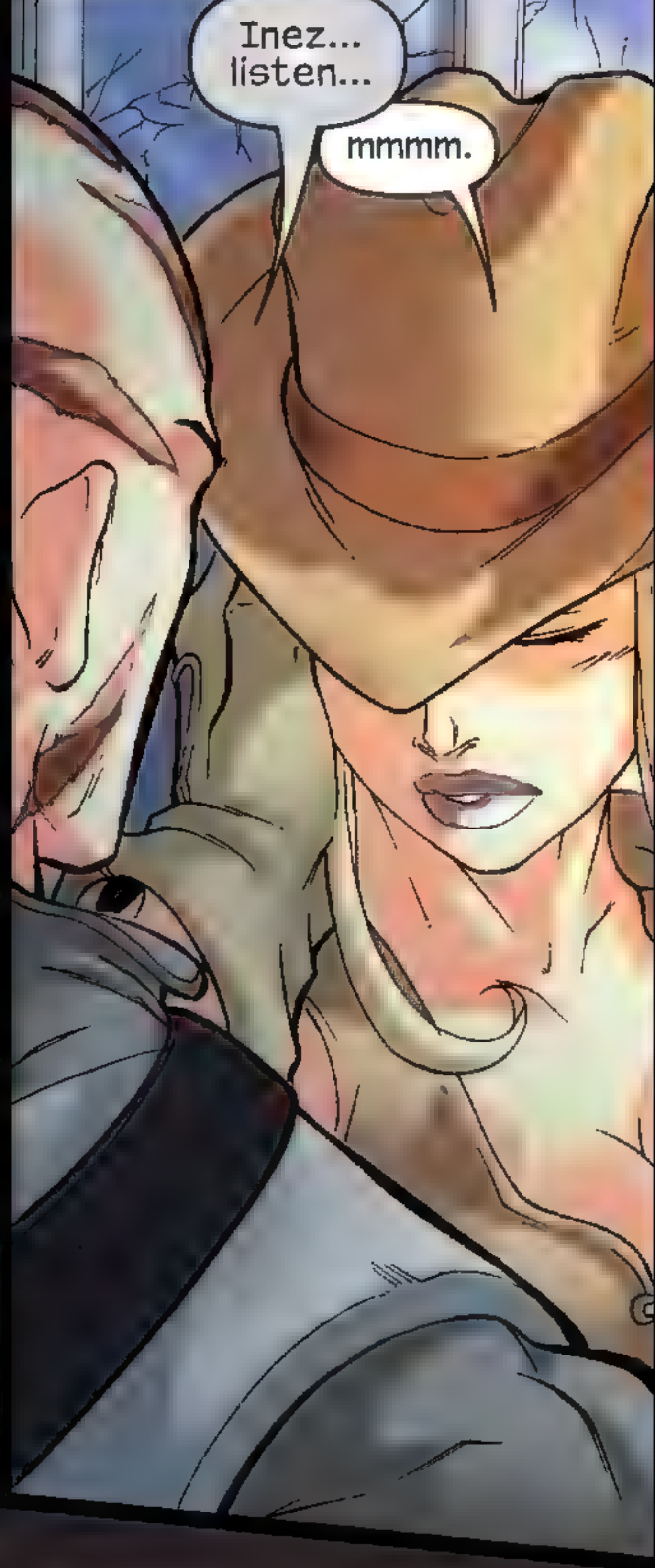
Edited by
Andrew Lis

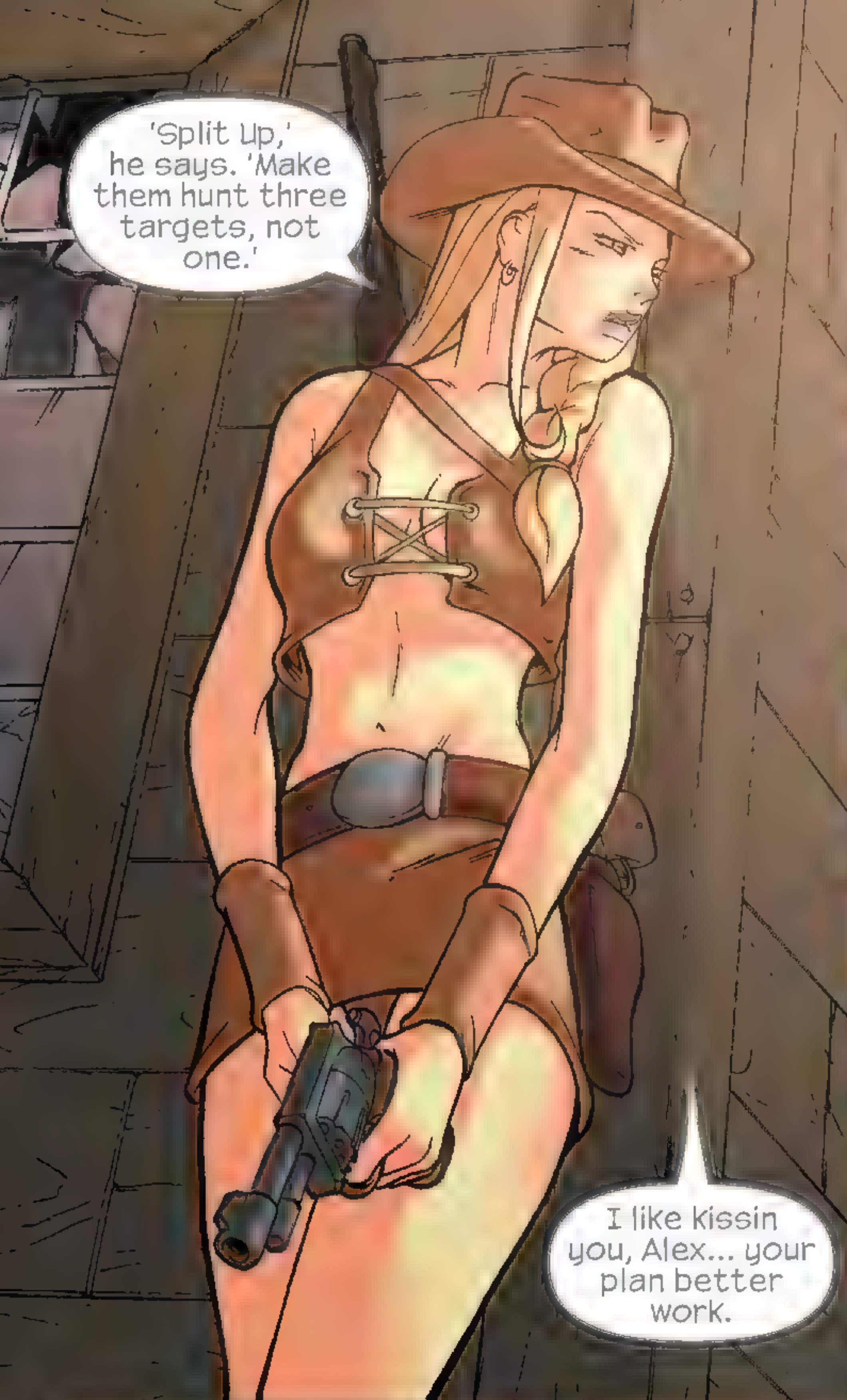
Chief
Joe Quesada

President
Bill Jemas









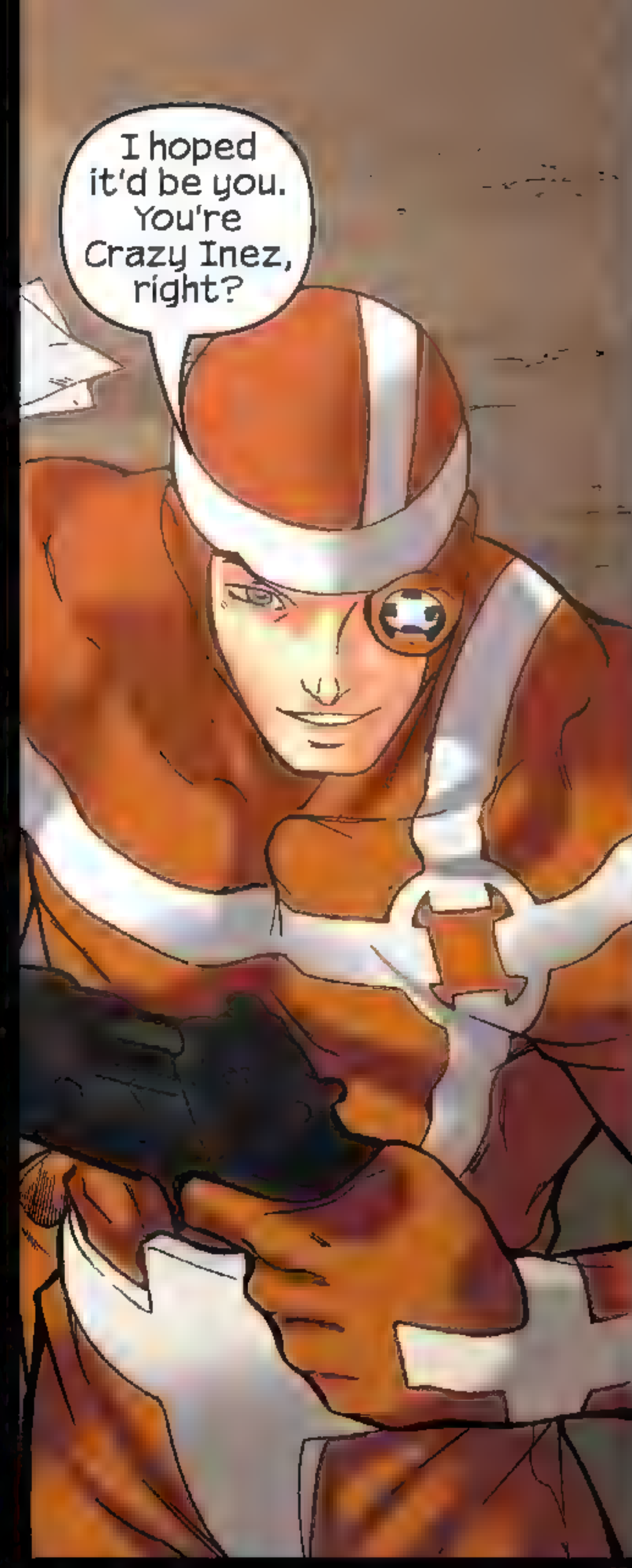
'Split up,' he says. 'Make them hunt three targets, not one.'

I like kissin you, Alex... your plan better work.

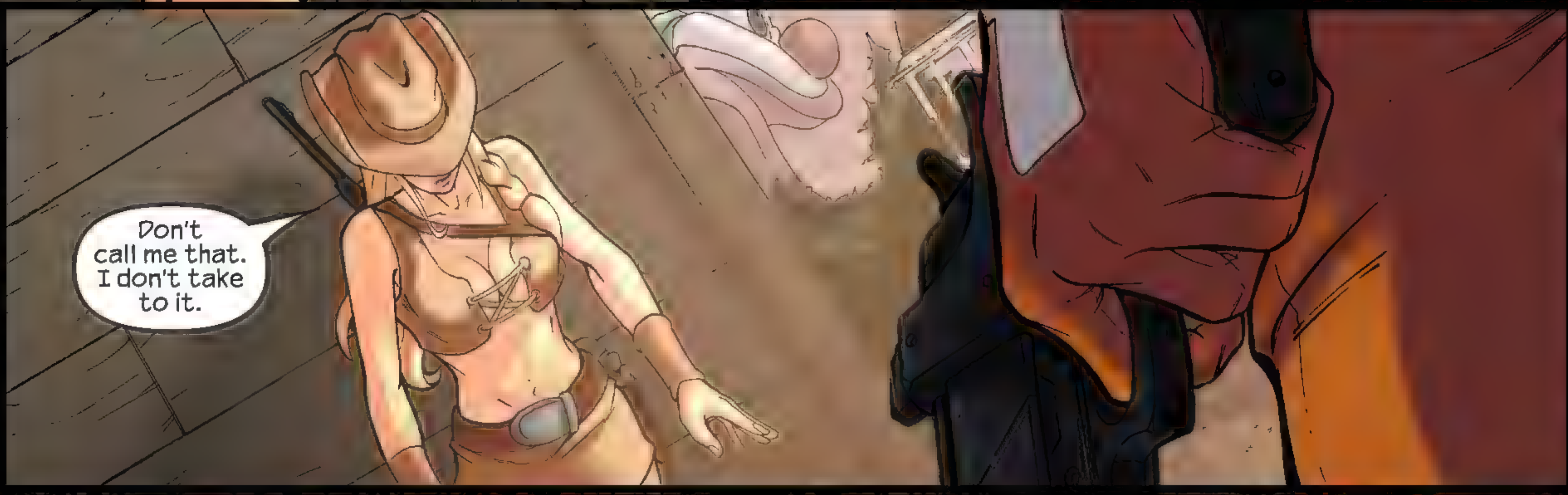


Well, hey there, pretty lady.

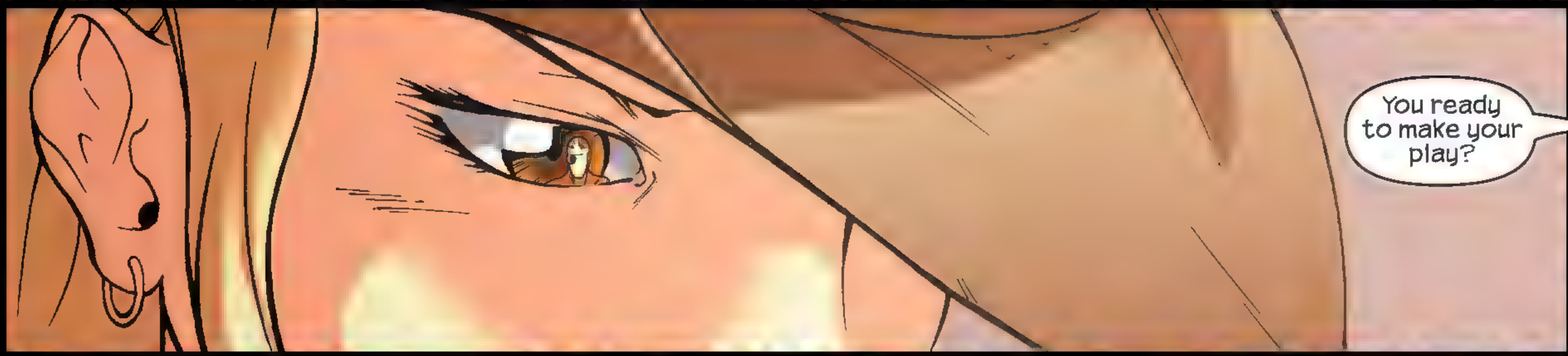
Figured one of you might come down this path.



I hoped it'd be you. You're Crazy Inez, right?



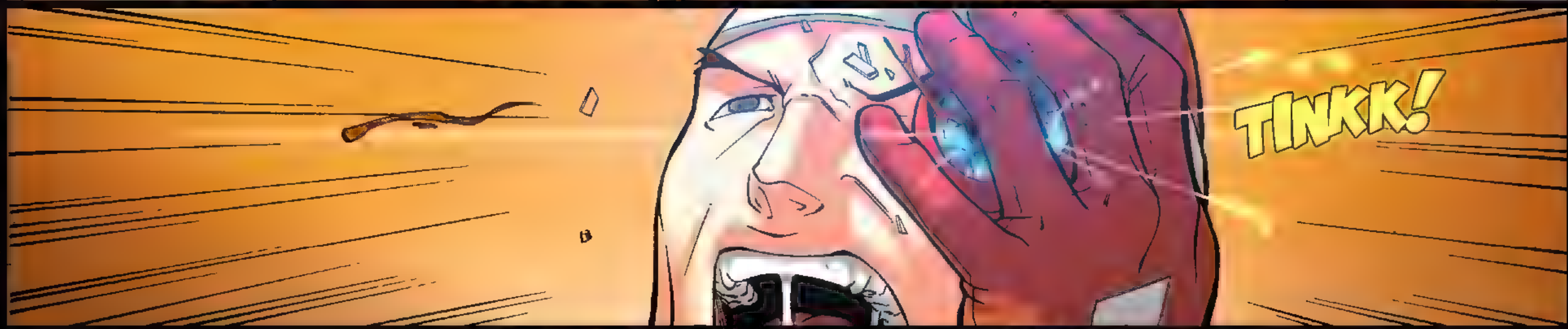
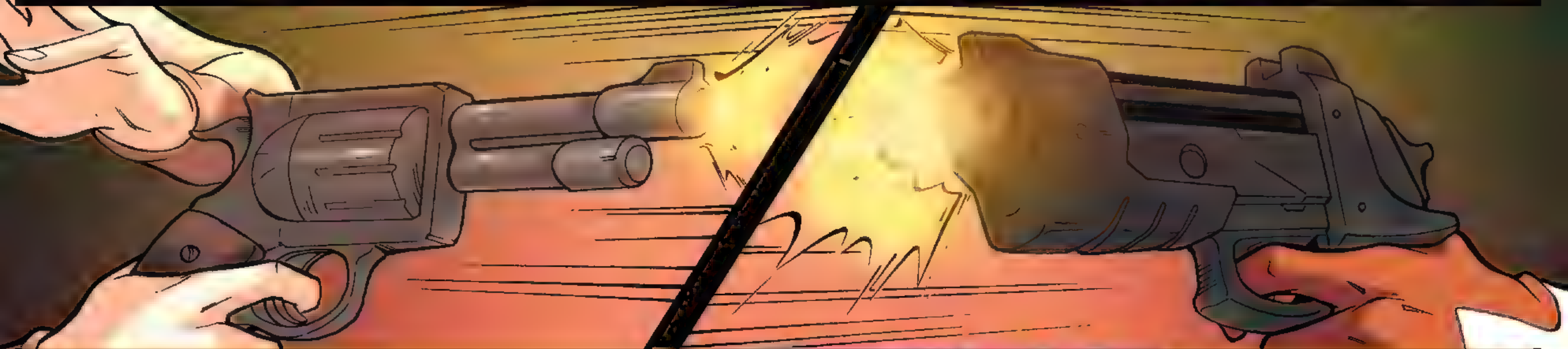
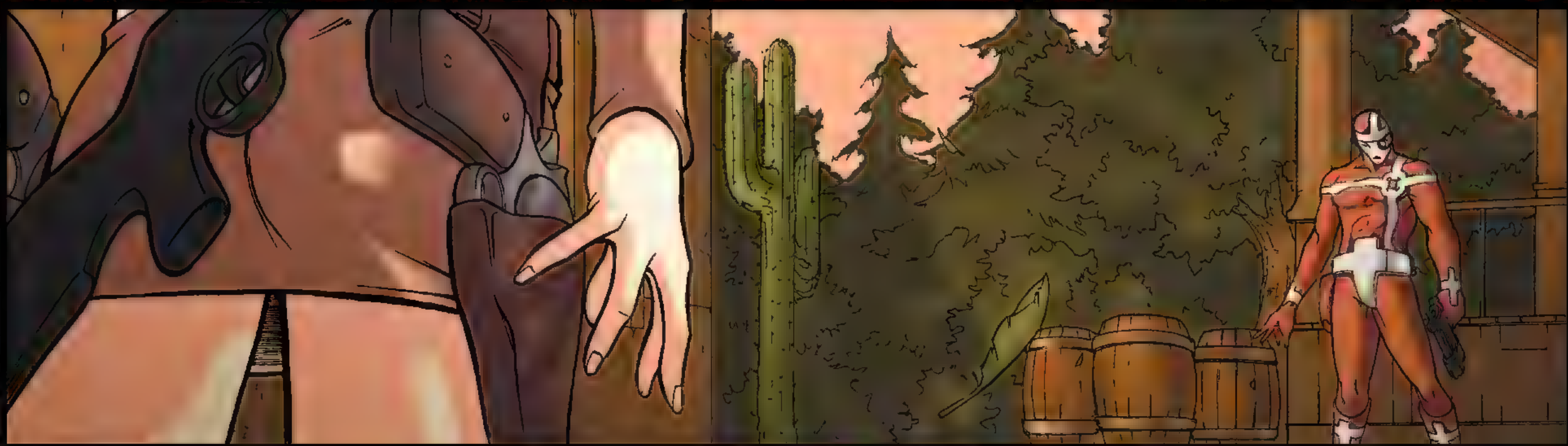
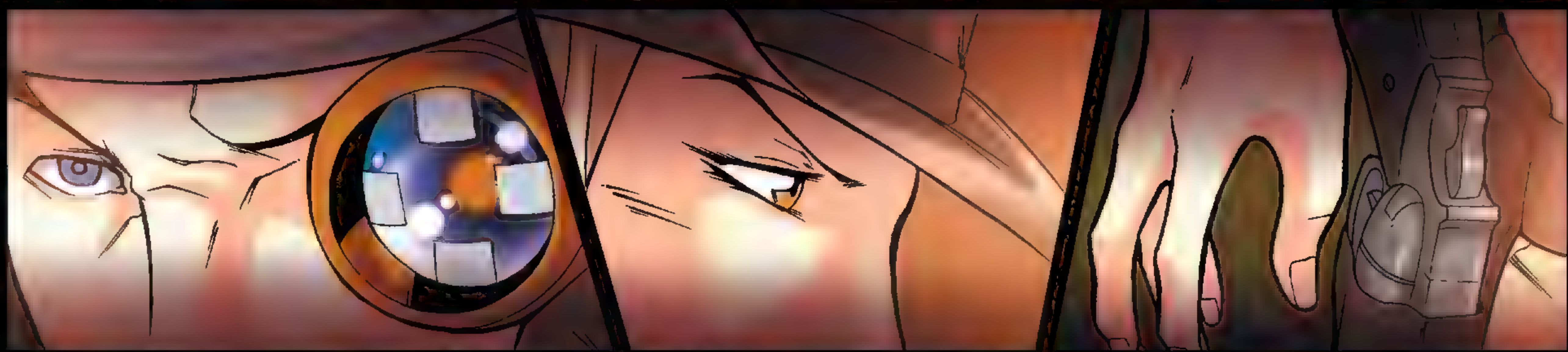
Don't call me that. I don't take to it.

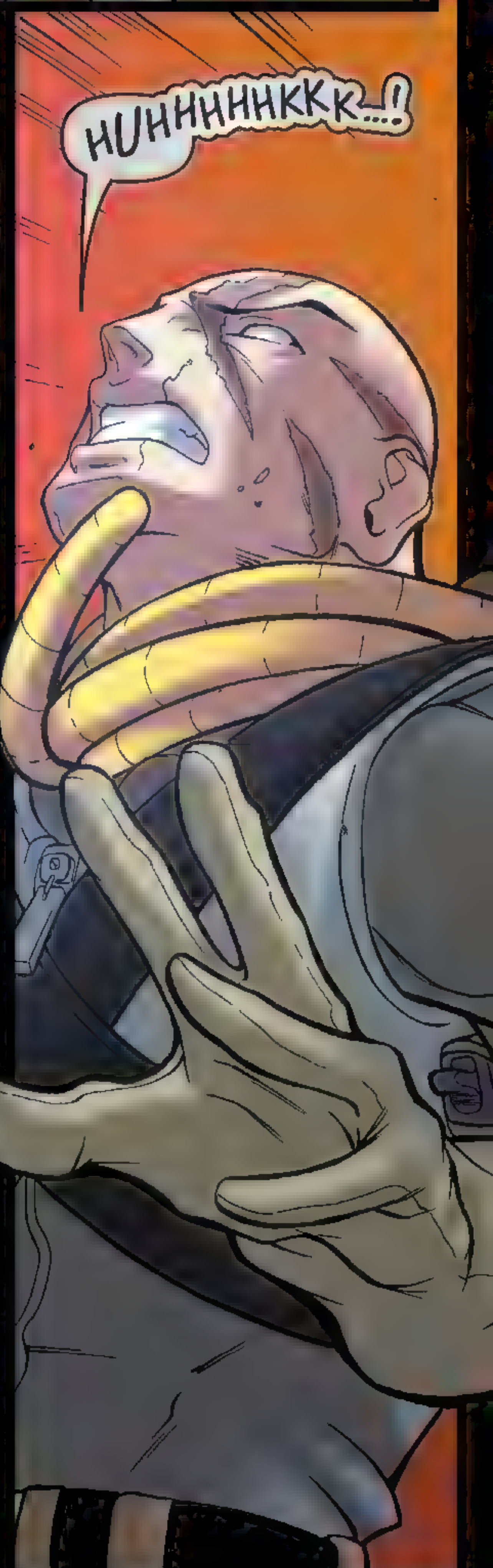
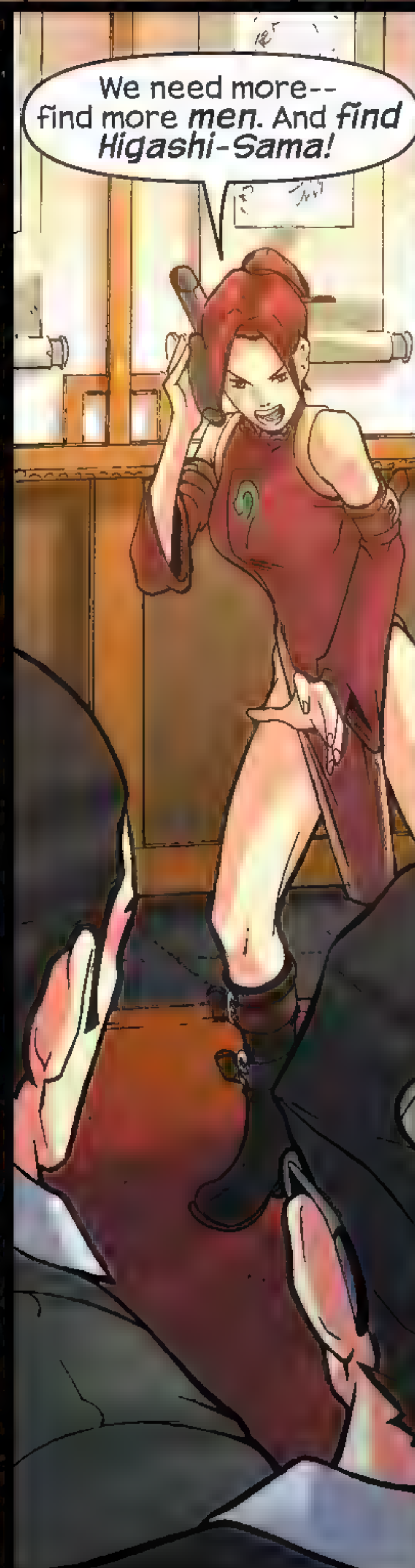
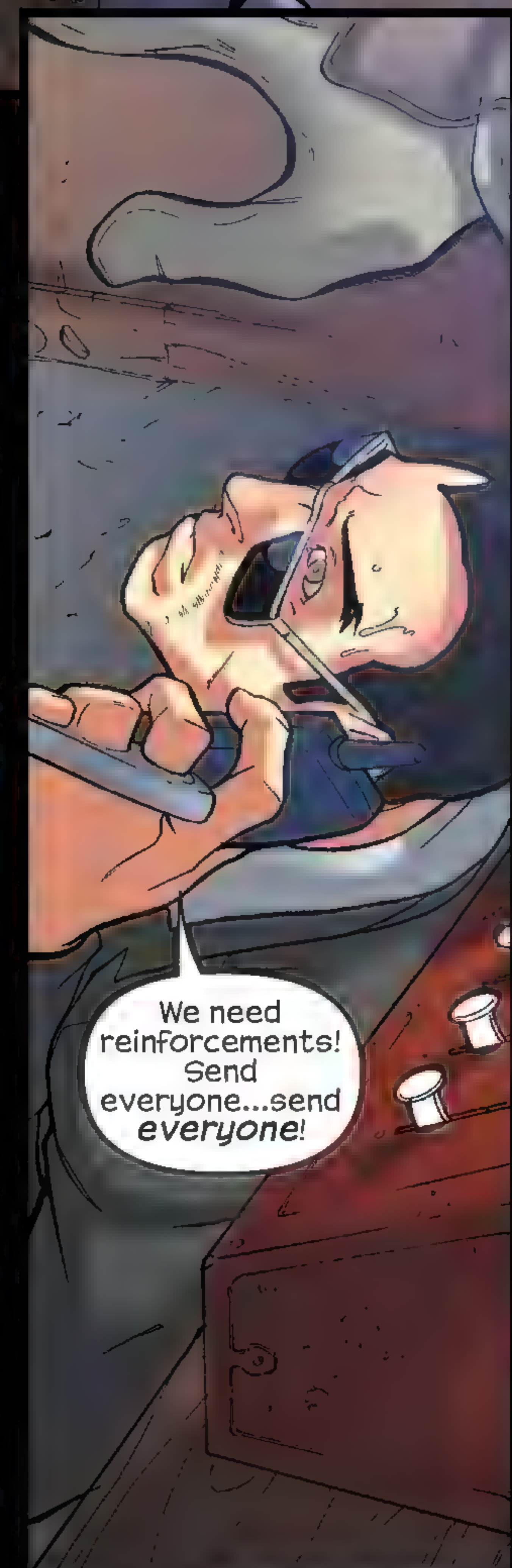


You ready to make your play?



Oh, yeah. Been waiting a long time for jus' this sort of predicament...







I know what each of you is thinking... let someone *else* go first. To be honest, those are good instincts.

Let me make this easy for you.



I'll go first.



Hold my place in hell, pal.



There's a bonus for your head, Hayden.

Doesn't even look like I'll have to share.

Well, well. What an interesting dilemma.



Lady who hired us said you're Wade Wilson. But I think she's loopy.

Wade Wilson was a badass. You're just a guy who hunts monkeys.

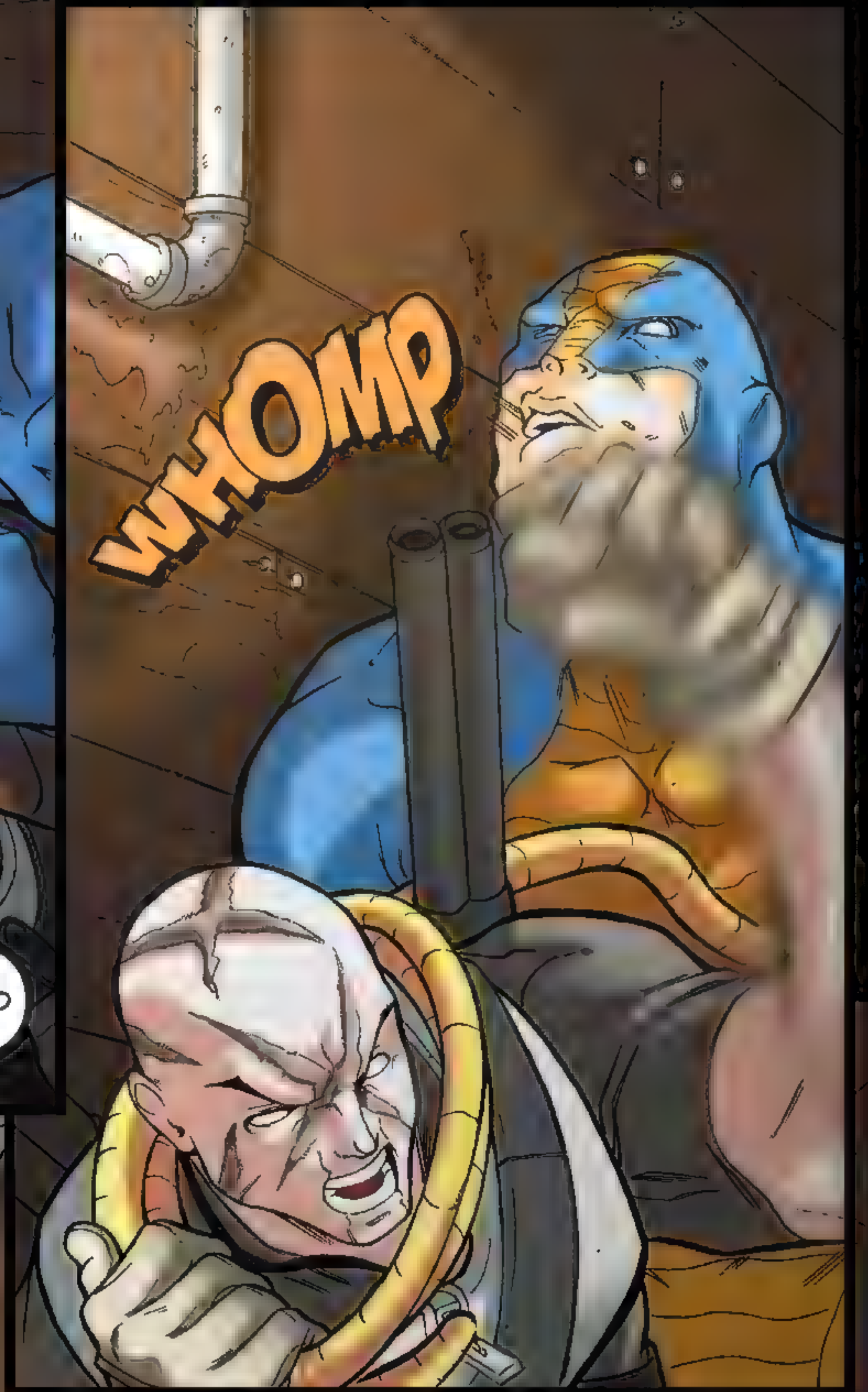
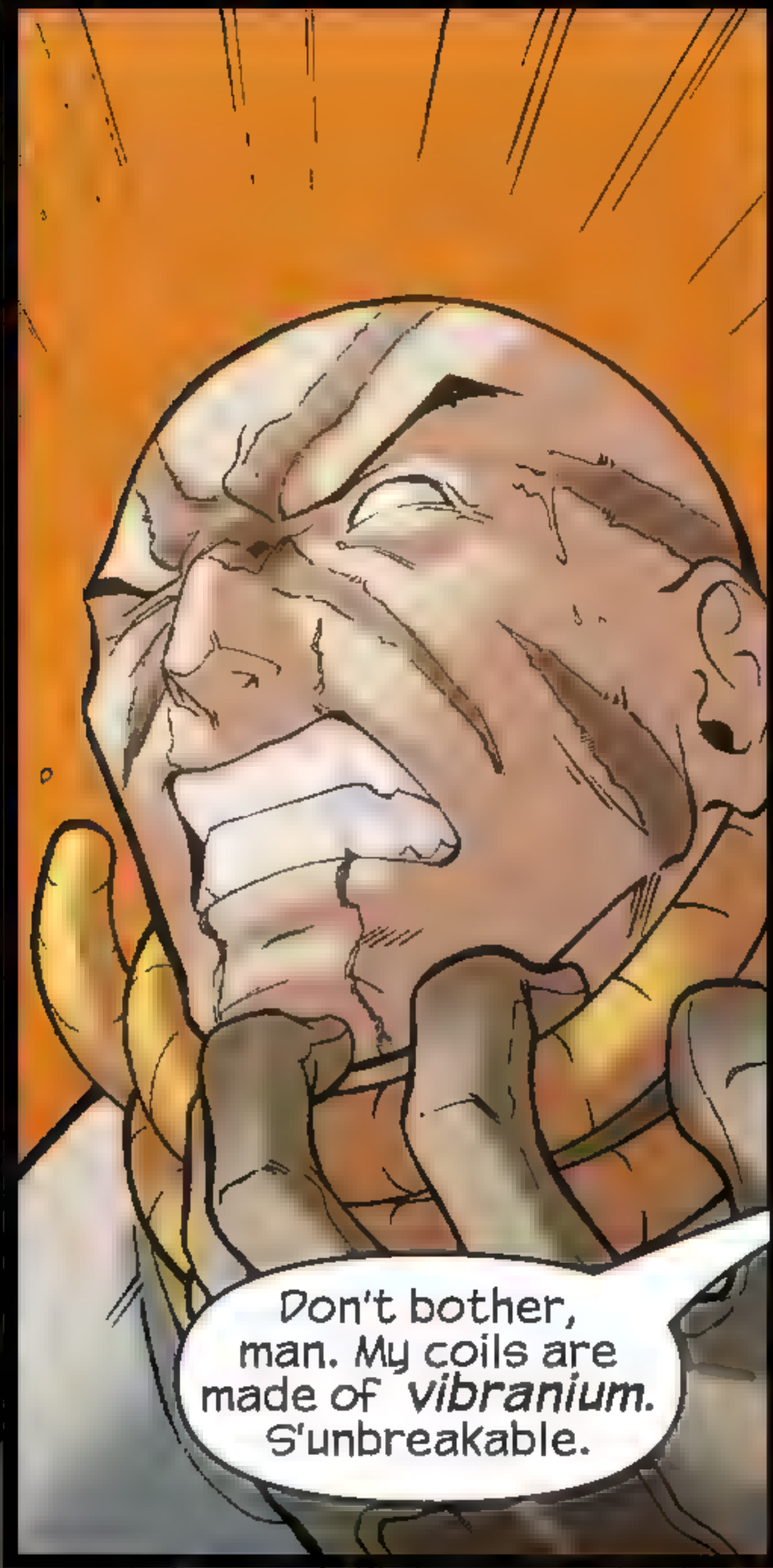
I help him, I help him not. I help him, I help him not.

URK

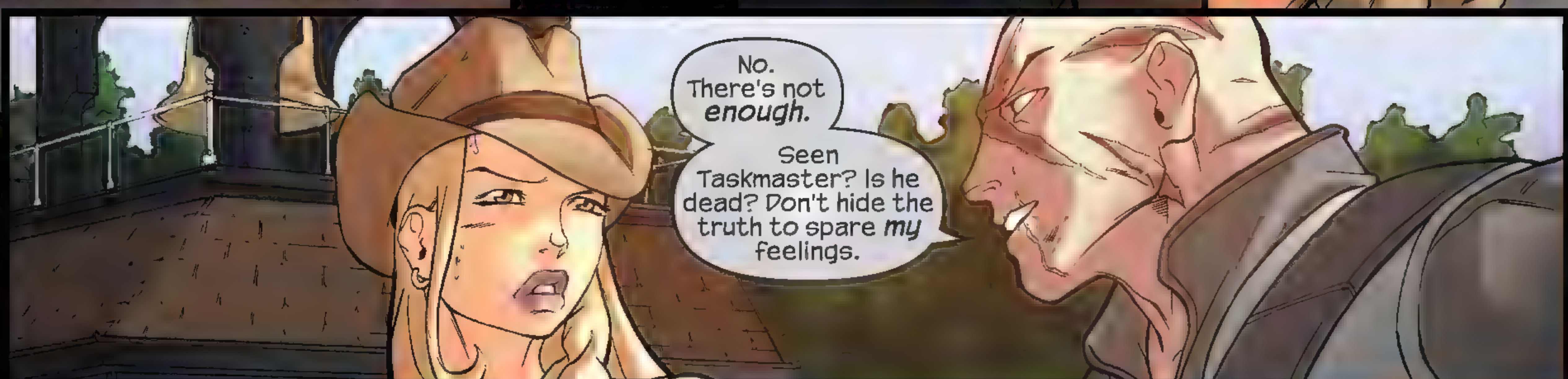


Feel the voltage, freak? I got *lots* more.

I wish I had a *coin* to flip. Maybe I'll go look for one.









I'm not...Wade... Wilson...

That Japanese lady said you was.

Gonna kill you good, liar.



I never lie. I embellish the truth!

ARRRRRRHH!



Alex, please tell me Phase Two is haul ass and call the Avengers.

Sorry, no. But I did just have a scintillating notion... Come on.

UNNN



You got what the medical experts call a *bone* sticking out of your arm.

Here, we'll make a sling, ya big crybaby.



I bet ya think I'm peeved.

For shooting me in the face and all.

Go! Get Ready!

But I'm a forgiving guy. Honest.



Yoo-hoo!
Oh, Mr. Horny
Man!



Givin' up?
I hate that.
I hate *quitters*
worse'n
liars.

Hey, did I
ever mention
that Outlaw is a
champion lariat-
thrower?

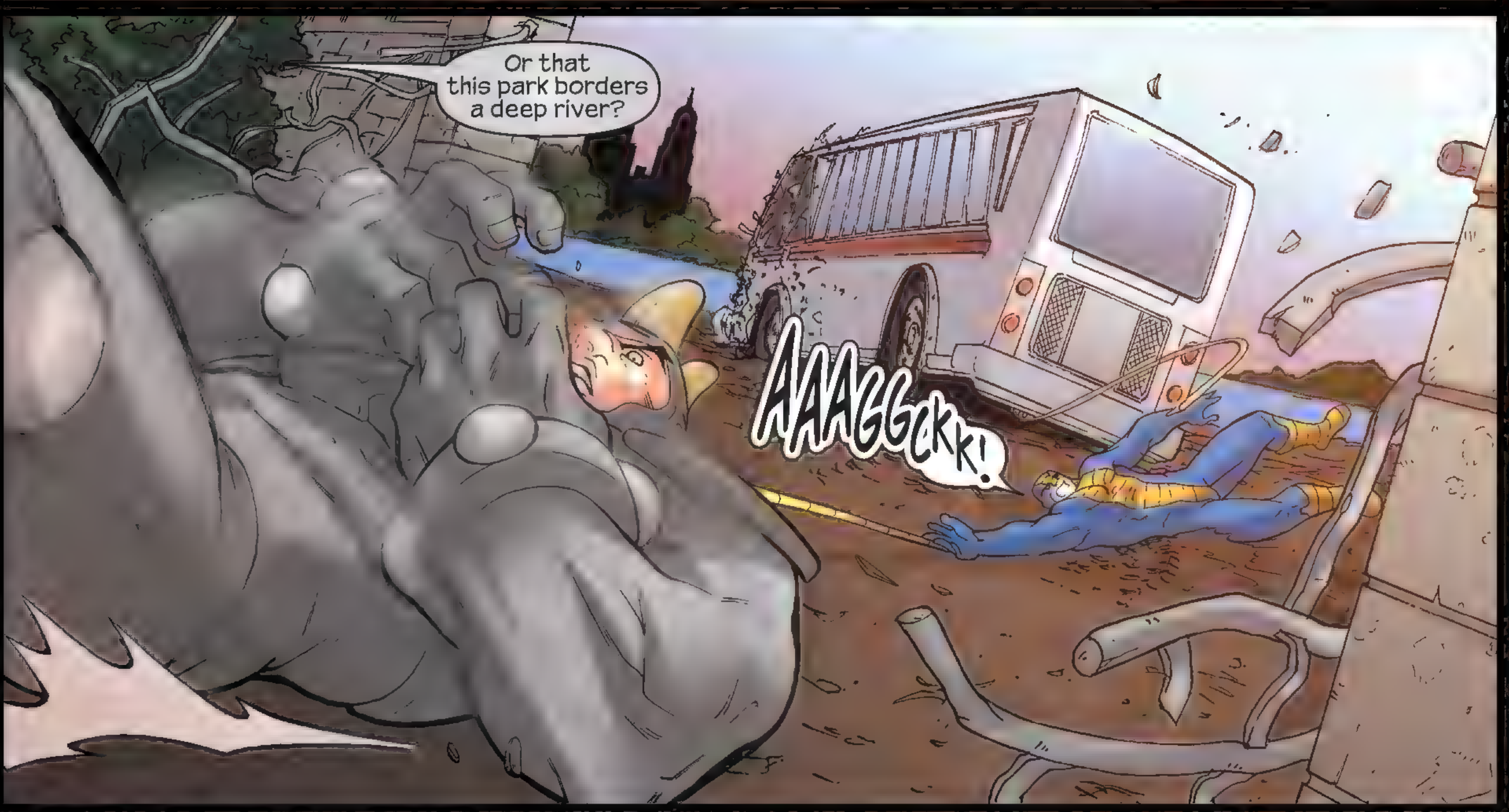


Or that that
Constrictor
guy's *coils* are
unbreakable?

URK...!

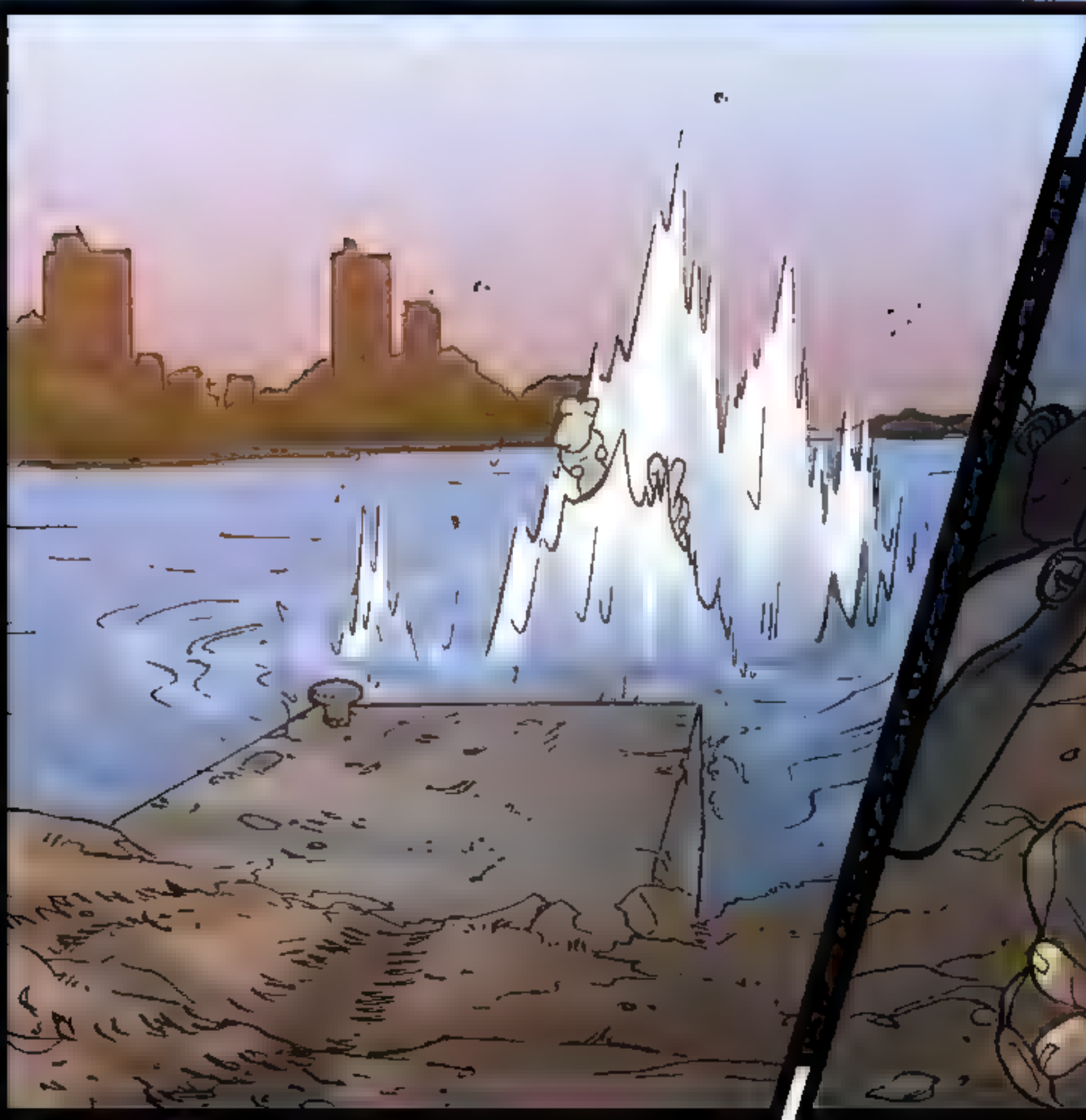
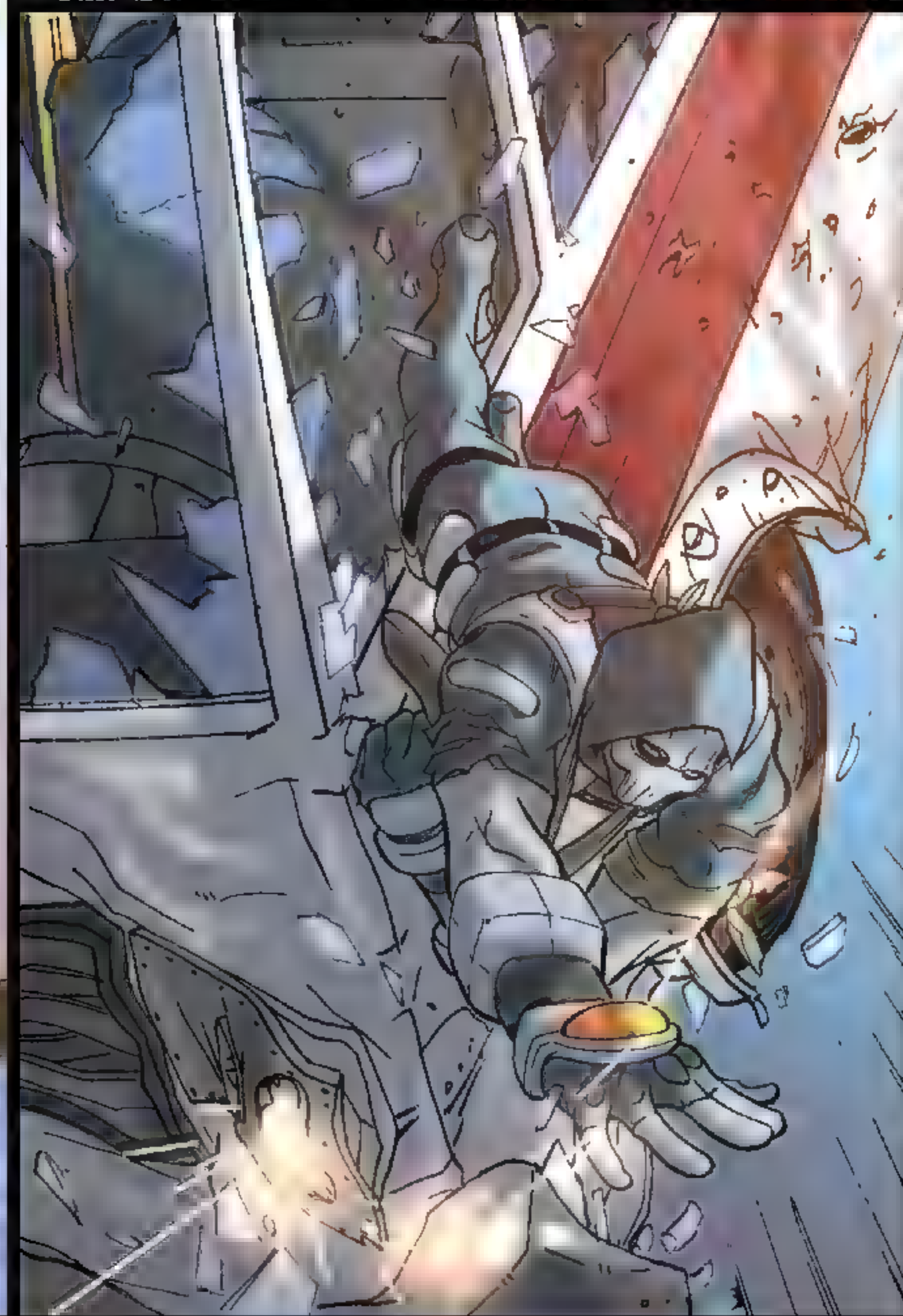
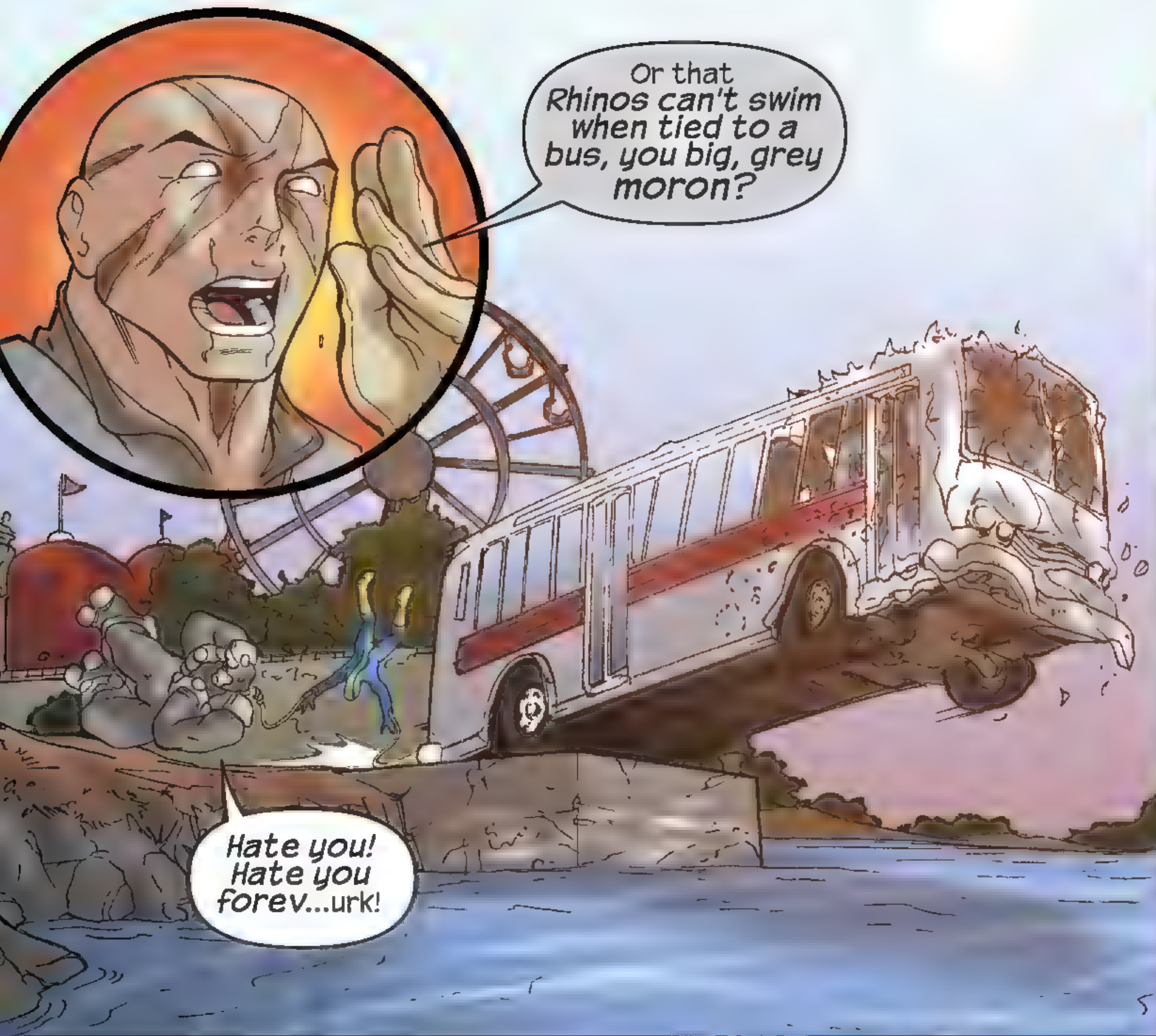


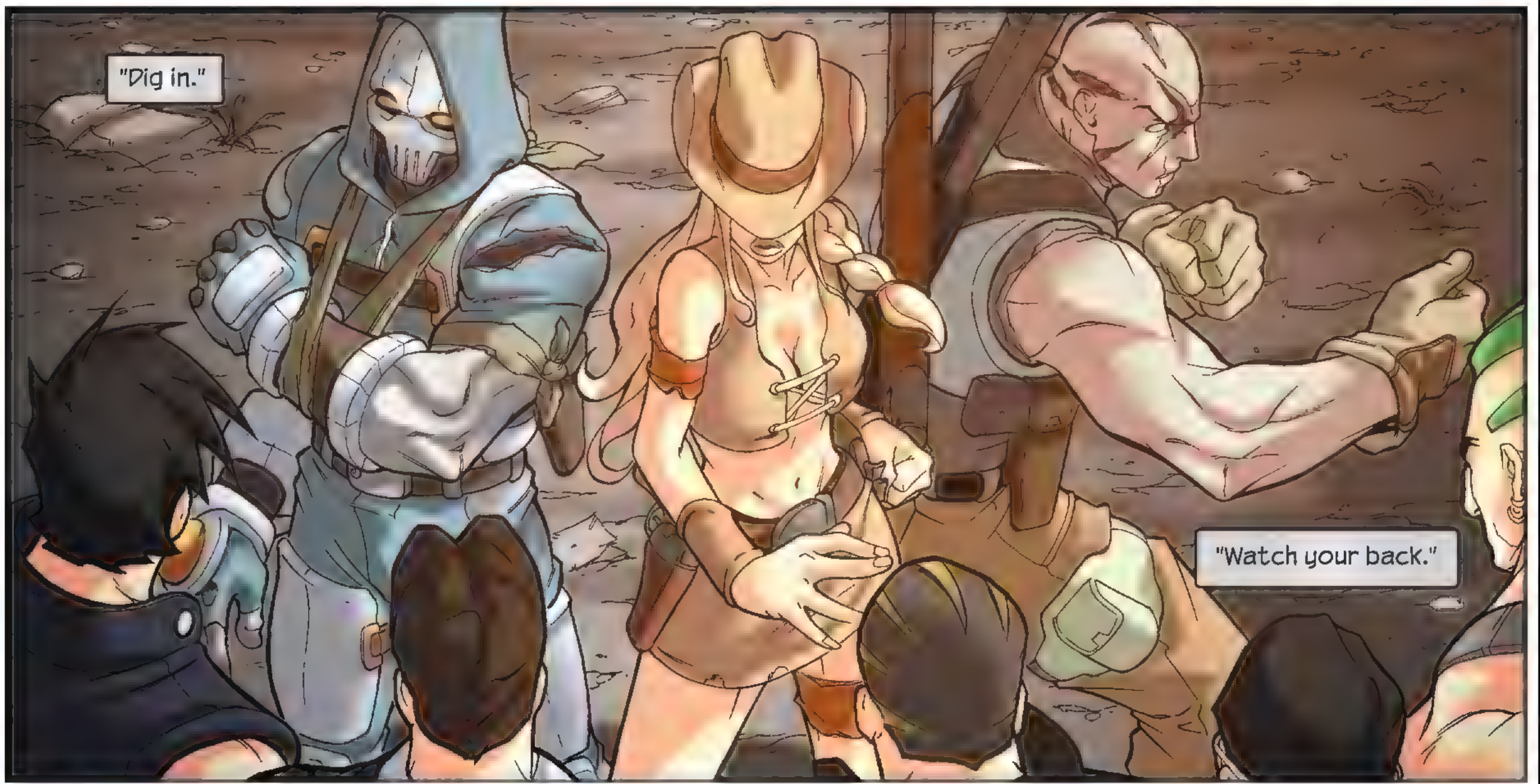
Or that
Taskmaster
can drive with
one arm?

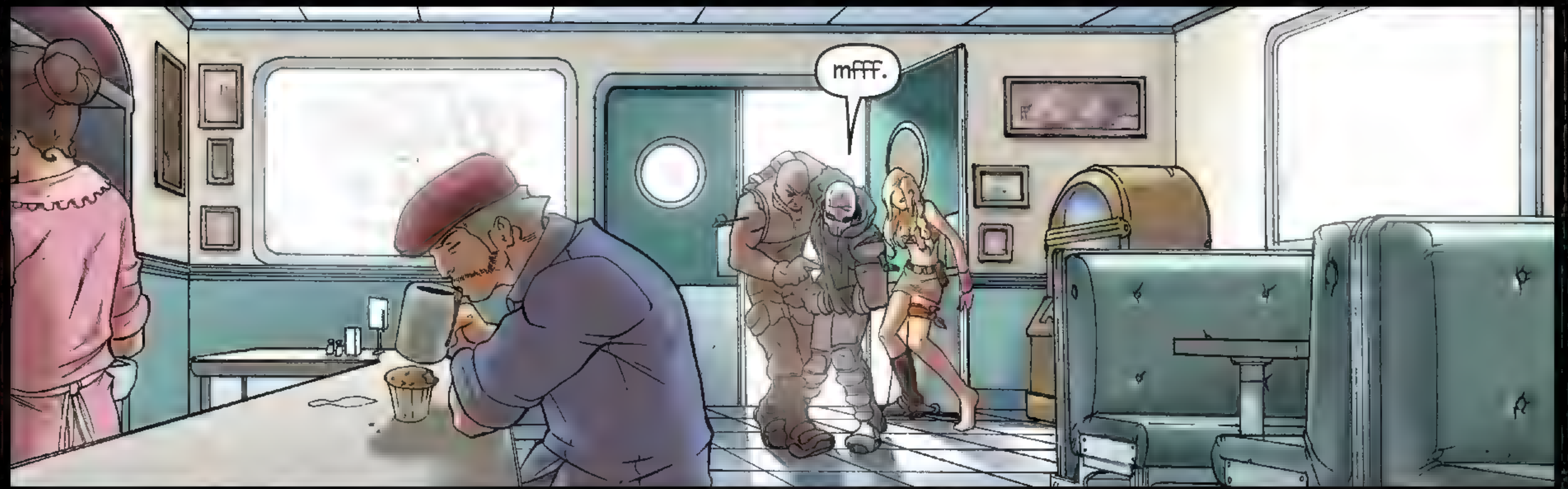
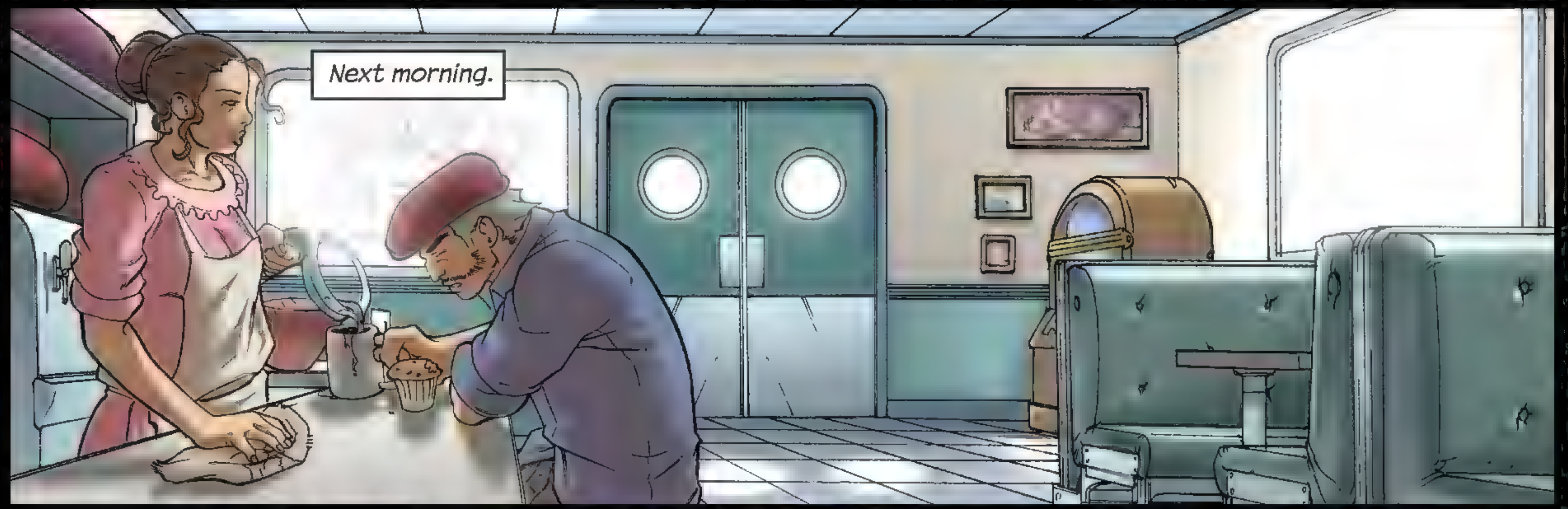


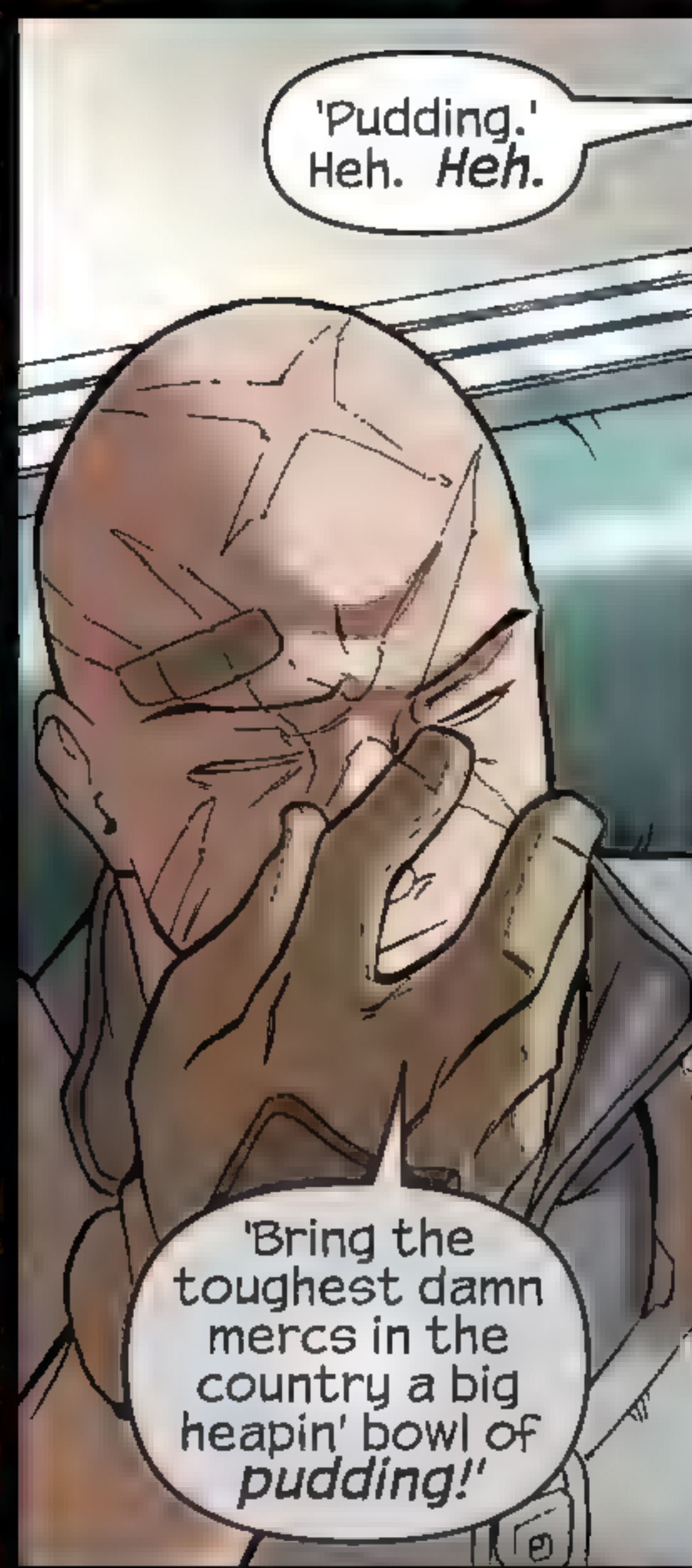
Or that
this park borders
a deep river?

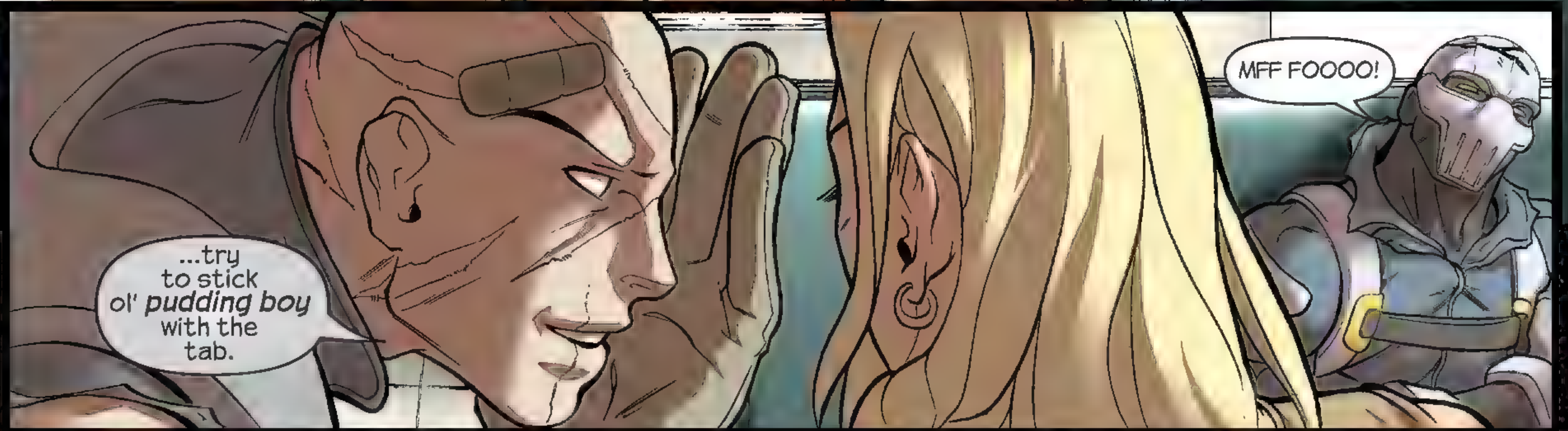
AAAAAGGEEKK!

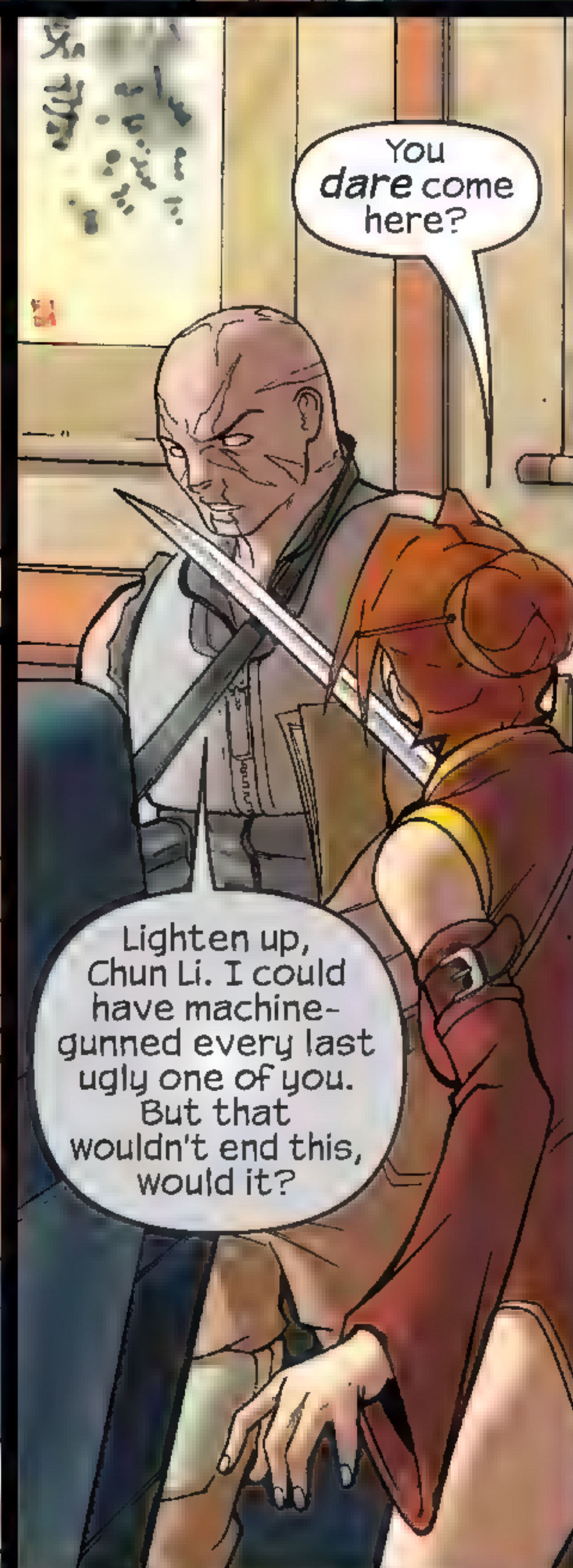












Your families, in fact. Wives, children, mistresses...

Taken just last night, from inside your pristine and shiny houses. Nice close-ups, wouldn't you say?

Don't worry, they're all fine. For now.

However, if a single one of your people comes within a four block radius of any of us, ever...

...you'll find out just how breakable your entire world is.

Interesting proposition, Mr. Hayden...

This merc don't jerk, Popeye.

This is outrageous! He murdered our lady!

Different guy entirely.

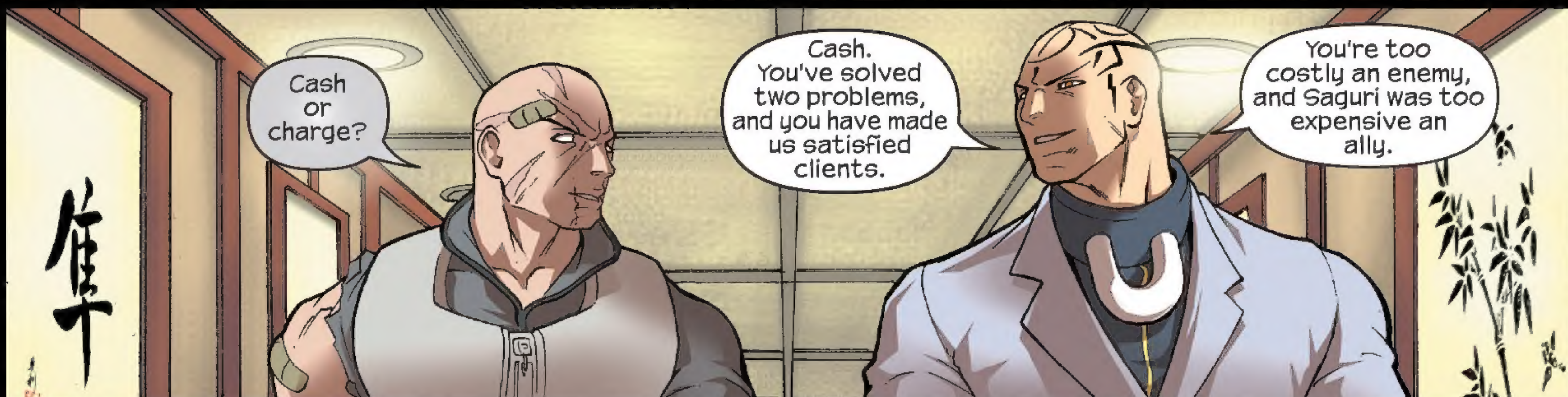
More or less...

If you're seriously considering this--

--I'll kill him myself!

Anyway, whoever I am doesn't matter. What matters is, late last night, I took on a new client.





Cash or charge?

Cash. You've solved two problems, and you have made us satisfied clients.

You're too costly an enemy, and Saguri was too expensive an ally.



But I *would* have killed you, had Miss Brandenburg not convinced me that you're not the man who murdered my predecessor.

Well, *you're* only alive because she *trusts* you for some reason.



Let us hope she is right about both of us.

Alex!



Are Tony and Inez...?

Hurting, but okay.

Come on. All this happy ending stuff is making me itch.



I told you Higashi wouldn't let me be hurt. He's actually kind of sweet.

Yeah, he's the most wonderfullest psycho crime boss of all.

And he knew I'd kill him next...



Now that that's over, you know what I could go for right now?

Some pudding!

NEXT:
SHAMEFUL WILLIAM

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